

SUMMARY REPORT

SECOND PROVINCIAL FORUM, KISANGANI

DATE: 3 – 5 MAY 2010

Introduction

The second provincial forum for Kisangani was held on 3rd to 5th May 2010, organised by Forest Monitor's coordination team for Ituri and the Provincial Ministry for Land Affairs, Environment and Tourism. About 50 people participated in this forum, coming from governmental and non-governmental organisations, the provincial assembly, higher education and scientific research institutes, the private sector and local and indigenous communities.



During the forum, participants considered (a) the results of the community dialogues held in Mambasa Territory, (b) the recommendations of the Mambasa local forum, and (c) the results of the participatory mapping. Consequently, the proposed decree on allocating concessions to local communities was analysed and a series of recommendations made on the policy and legal framework for community forest management.

Presentations

Four presentations were given during the course of the forum: (a) summary report from the second local forum in Mambasa, (b) results of the dialogues held with indigenous communities, (c) preliminary results of the participatory mapping at Teturi and (d) consensus notes from the five last national fora. These presentations were supported by accounts from local and indigenous community representatives. For example, on behalf of all the chiefs from Mambasa Territory chieftaincy, the head of the Babombi chieftaincy shared a memorandum sent to the Governor of Orientale Province requesting the suspension of artisanal logging throughout the Territory in order to give the State time to better organise access to and management of community forests. Such a decision could be justified, according to the head of the chieftaincy, by the environmental, social and economic waste being caused by artisanal logging and by the population's desire

to profit more from “their” forests. From this perspective, the community forest concept is a promising one for them.

Another account was given by Mama Mukeina, representing indigenous communities. She emphasised the difficult living conditions of indigenous peoples in Mambasa Territory, particularly in terms of continuing to live their traditional way of life. She noted the threatening presence of forest park guards and poachers which can be a source of insecurity. Mama Mukeina also noted the need and urgency for indigenous peoples to have official documents guaranteeing their rights to the forest.

Further discussions followed these presentations in order to help clarify different aspects of community forestry and to add further detail.

Working groups

A number of working groups were established, these focusing on the 6 issues considered in the last community dialogues, namely:

- community forests as a tool for development;
- community forest management institutions;
- managing the profits from community forests;
- the role of customary authorities in community forest management;
- reconciling individual uses and the collective nature of community forests;
- preventing and managing conflicts arising in community forests.

The results of these discussions formed the basis for a series of recommendations aimed at the process of developing a policy and legal framework on community forestry.



Main recommendations

The participants at this forum recognised that community forests are a potential tool that could contribute significantly to poverty alleviation within forest communities. For this to occur, they need to be well-organised and planned by means of a land management or development plan. The income generated will need to be directed towards meeting the priority needs of local communities’.

Regarding community management institutions, the participants all agreed on the need to establish a technical body that will have responsibility for developing and promoting community forests within each community. This body, which could be called either an executive committee or local development committee as appropriate, would be placed under the dual authority of the whole community and its legal officers. The activities of this technical body would need to be monitored and supervised by a monitoring and supervisory committee, which would in turn report back to a general assembly of the community members. The participants recommended that, to be effective and manageable, the general assembly should be composed of representatives of the families, clans or villages that form the local community.

In terms of managing the profits generated by community forests, the participants recommended that community development plans be produced and that these could be funded by the income from community forests. This development plan would need to include the needs and interests of all sectors of the community, including women and indigenous people. In particular, it was noted that the body responsible for developing and promoting the community forest would need to work hard to diversify sources of forest income.

In terms of reconciling individual uses and the collective nature of community forests, the provincial forum suggested that the individual use rights of community members could be guaranteed and protected in the community forest. The way in which they are exercised would, however, need to be organised in such a way as to ensure the social and environmental sustainability of forest management. In more practical terms, this would entail identifying all individual activities exercised in the forest and those that would be to the benefit of the whole community. The management body should aim to minimise the conflicts between individual and collective uses of the forest.

The forum participants felt that numerous conflicts existed within the forest environment caused, among other things, by: infringement of boundaries between fields, marginalisation and discrimination of indigenous peoples by the Bantu, lack of fairness in court judgements, conflicts of interest between community members, and bad governance. Some conflicts could be prevented by: better structuring and organisation of local communities; participatory mapping and the participatory zoning of community forests; and making the legal texts on natural resources more widely known. When conflicts do arise, the provincial forum suggested using traditional approaches to conflict resolution through the elders. Modern courts should only be used as a last resort.

Consideration of the proposed decree on allocating concessions to local communities

A proposed decree on allocating concessions to local communities was submitted to the forum participants for their consideration. Comments and observations were made on the text, which were passed on to the project's national coordination team. The text was generally favourably received by the participants, and they were keen to highlight this. It was also noted that they would like to receive the final version of the text when this is transmitted to the government.

Kisangani, 5 May 2010
Project management committee, Ituri

