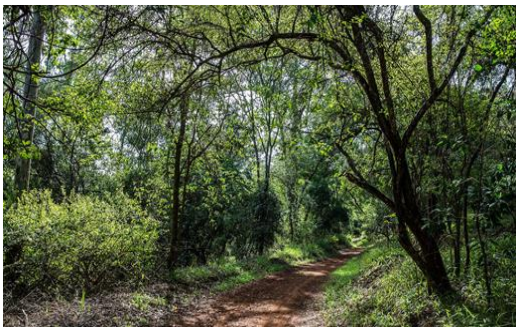




A PLATFORM FOR STAKEHOLDERS IN AFRICAN FORESTRY

ENHANCEMENT OF AFRICAN NATIONAL FOREST GOVERNANCE
TO RESPOND TO THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND RELATED
GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE POLICIES AND INITIATIVES



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Enhancement of African national forest governance to respond to the Paris Agreement and related global change policies and initiatives

FOKABS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	5
LIST OF FIGURES.....	5
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	7
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	8
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Description of the objectives.....	4
2. METHODOLOGY.....	5
2.1 An overview of the methodology	5
2.2 Case study countries	6
3. RESULTS	8
3.1 On response to Paris Agreement and related global climate change policies and initiatives.....	8
3.1.1. <i>Assessment of Forest governance in the selected case study countries in West and Central Africa.....</i>	8
3.1.2. <i>Forestry initiatives and climate change related policies in Central and West African countries</i>	11
3.1.3. <i>Areas of overlap and synergy in the national forestry sector in response to global and regional climate change related policies and initiatives.....</i>	13
3.1.4. <i>Knowledge gaps and skills among African forestry stakeholders in mainstreaming of global and regional climate change policies and initiatives into national forestry policies, plans and activities, and their coordination.</i>	14
3.1.5. <i>Capacity gaps on reporting forest-based plans and activities that relate to SDGs and NDCs at national, regional and international level.....</i>	24
3.2 National Forest Sector Contributions to NDC	25
3.2.1. <i>An assessment of the contribution of the forest sector to NDC of targeted countries.</i>	25
3.2.2. <i>The level of integration of forest-based climate change adaptation and mitigation and the Representation of LULUCF in NDCs</i>	35
4. DISCUSSION.....	36
4.1.1 Forest governance	36
4.1.2 Forestry initiatives and climate change related policies	36
5. CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	38
6. REFERENCES.....	40
ANNEXES	45

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 1: Actors involved in the development, implementation and mainstreaming global initiatives into national forest and climate change policies.</i>	15
<i>Table 2: Stakeholders in charge of developing, deciding and implementing forest-related rules, policies, strategies and legislation.</i>	21
<i>Table 3 : Mechanisms used for stakeholder consultation, participation, implementation, and monitoring of forest policies.....</i>	22
<i>Table 4 NDC evolutions for countries in Central and West Africa</i>	27
<i>Table 5: Lead structures for the process of developing and reviewing NDC.</i>	28
<i>Table 6: Efforts, challenges and opportunities for developing national forest sector contribution to NDC.....</i>	29
<i>Table 7: REDD+ initiatives with potential contribution to NDC</i>	31
<i>Table 8: Challenges, opportunities and proposed mitigative measures for integrating forest-based adaptation and mitigation activities and initiatives in NDCs.....</i>	33
<i>Table 9: The integration of forest related initiatives in NDCs of Central and West African countries.....</i>	35

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1: Countries visited and contribution to the total response pool.</i>	8
<i>Figure 2: Clarity and coherence in policy, legal, institutional, and regulatory frameworks in Central and West Africa.....</i>	9
<i>Figure 3: Transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness regarding forest policy implementation in West and Central Africa</i>	10
<i>Figure 4: Effectiveness, efficiency, and equitability in the implementation of forest policies, legal and regulatory frameworks in West and Central Africa</i>	10
<i>Figure 5: Barriers in the implementation of forest and climate initiatives in west and central African countries.....</i>	13

<i>Figure 6: Knowledge and skills on mainstreaming global and regional climate change policies and initiatives into national forestry policies in Central and West Africa</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Figure 7: The main challenges in mainstreaming regional and global frameworks into national policies and local program</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Figure 8: Limitations in integrating global initiatives into forest sector in West and Central Africa.</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Figure 9: Channels for reporting forest based and climate change information at national and international level.</i>	<i>24</i>
Figure 10: Consideration of forest project-based projects/programs in NDCs of Central and West African Countries.....	26
Figure 11: West and Central African counties evolution in NDC.	26

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFF	African Forest Forum
CAFI	Central African Forest Initiative
CFRM	Community Forest Resource Management Programme
CILSS	Inter State Permanent Committee to combat desertification
COFO	Committee on Forestry
COMIFAC	Central African Forest Commission
COP	Conference of Parties
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DDD	Directorate of Sustainable Development
DRC	The Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community for West African States
EDA	Environment and Development Associated
ER	Emission Reduction
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FCP	Forest Convergence Plan
FDA	Forest Development Authority
FIP	Forest Investment Program
FOMAREDD	DRC National REDD+ Fund
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GFI	Global Forest Initiative
GHG	Green House Gas
IAF	International Arrangement of Forests
IFGA	International Forest Governance and Policy Arrangements
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contributions
IPCC	Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change
KP	Kyoto Protocol
LULUCF	Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry
MCVDD	Minister for the Living Environment and Sustainable Development
MEDD	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PA	Paris Agreement
PAWP	Paris Agreement Working Program
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation
RoC	The Republic of Congo
RPP	Readiness Preparation Proposal
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFF	United Nations Forest Forum

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This sought to generate information and knowledge on climate change issues, to support actors in the forestry sector to formulate appropriate forest policies, programs, plans and activities that have potential to strengthen sustainable forest management in a changing climate context. The study undertook an in-depth analysis that could provide information to enhance national forest governance to respond to the Paris Agreement (PA) and related global climate change policies and initiatives in Central and West Africa. Specifically, this study assessed forest governance and national forest sector contribution to NDCs in West and Central African countries.

The study used context and policy analysis of existing literature from secondary data from Central and West Africa, which was triangulated with primary data collected from the field. The study covered selected case study countries including the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Mali, Gambia, Liberia, and Benin. A total of 48 respondents were interviewed as illustrated in Figure 1. Primary data were collected through interviews (face-to-face and email). Data collected (quantitative and qualitative) were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis using SPSS version 24 from which charts, and tables were generated and translated into the study deliverables.

Some key results obtained were as follows:

For the coherence and clarity of forest policies, legal institutional and regulatory framework in the selected case study countries (Figure 2), 31% of respondents expressed very strong agreement for provisions and mechanisms for equity sharing, clarity and coherence in policies and laws (33%) and recognition of customary and traditional rights. Similarly, for transparency, accountability and inclusivity of forest processes and institutions (Figure 3), 35% of respondents strongly agree with the legal framework making provisions for opportunities for public participation and the support for transparency and accountability (25%) such as public access to information, transparency in the allocation of timber and non-timber forest products concessions, permits and user rights etc. 15% of respondents reported strong disagreement with the existence of effective and independent government oversight mechanism.

The study found that forest governance in general was partly good in the case study countries. Specifically, it was observed that there was some clarity and coherence in policy, legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks. Additionally, it was revealed that there was some transparency, accountability and inclusiveness regarding forest policy implementation. The only negative issue was noted at the operational decision-making levels where there was inadequate coordination.

In addition, it was revealed that the most common barriers to effective implementation of forestry initiatives and climate change related policies for most institutions and organizations in West and Central Africa included, among others, the lack of capacity at technical, logistical, financial levels; lack of political will, weak enforcement of forest

laws and legislations, lack of trained personnel, ineffective coordination within the natural resource sector, inadequate capacity in the private and public sector (Figure 5). Knowledge and skills on mainstreaming global and regional climate change policies and initiatives into national forestry policies was good and some examples of these initiatives were provided which included among others; institutional capacity to undertake forest inventory (14.6%), negotiation skills for technical expertise in forestry and Climate Change (14.6%) and knowledge in representatives in related global initiatives and processes (12.5%) (Figure 6). However, limited understanding and financing were the main challenges in mainstreaming regional and global frameworks into national policies and local program. Key limitations of forest stakeholders to properly integrate global initiatives into the forest sector initiatives included the following: the issue of benefit sharing where some stakeholder groups do not receive benefits from the forest sector; lack of awareness where respondents do not have an understanding of some of the important global initiatives and limited financial technical capacity in engaging in the process of integrating these global initiatives, lack of integration in the planning and decision-making; non- mastery of relevant issues, lack of concrete information on the forestry sector; poor/lack of political will where even though there exist the policies and law, implementation is very weak, limited empowerment, and lack of synergistic actions (Figure 7).

Other challenges include difficulties encountered when reporting forest and climate change-based initiatives. These include poor internet connection; inadequate revenue; insufficient energy or limited electricity to power communication devices; weak political will i.e. weak government enforcement of legal instruments, limited capacity to report on forest and climate-based issues; poor periodic communication; high operation cost; technical issues; lack of adequate network, and limited television sets. Similarly, , factors that limit effective communication and dissemination of forest related initiatives related to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) included lack of political will (weak government enforcement of legal instrument), lack of finance for actual field data collection, lack of data, poor awareness of SDG, limited capacity, weak internet, lack of synergy among key stakeholders, unavailability of clear and precise data, limited human and financial capacities.

Most of the sampled countries have made lots of efforts towards building capacity and awareness raising in the forest sector, some of which include training local stakeholder on the NDC process. However, there are several challenges encountered in building this capacity and awareness. These include weak government implementation of legal instruments, limited financial and technical capacity.

There was a wide understanding of REDD+ in the case study countries and there exist a National REDD+ Strategy for most of them except for Gambia and Mali. However, REDD+ was mentioned in the NDCs of only 8 countries in the two regions. The study also identified that most of these countries integrated forest and Land Use Land Use Change and Forestry initiatives in their NDCs as a measure for contributing to combat and adapt to climate change. The study also identified challenges of stakeholders in integrating forest initiatives into NDC. These included among others maintaining robust

efforts in reforestations, poor communication and limited technical and financial capacity. Lastly it was noticed that the NDCs of most of the countries were their INDC which were converted to NDC as they ratified the Paris Agreement with the exception of Benin, Mali, Senegal and Rwanda who have actually submitted their NDCs. However, some of these countries are in the process of reviewing their NDCs.

In conclusion, very specific recommendations for overcoming challenges identified in this study were preferred by stakeholders and included among others proper knowledge transfer, investment in human and financial resources, proper capacity building including education and sensitization, the need for strong government engagement in the implementation of legal frameworks, laws and policies, the need for REDD+ Readiness in Gambia and Mali, and synergistic actions within relevant government institutions.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

During the 21st Conference of Parties (COP 21), held in Paris, member countries to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) adopted the Paris Agreement (PA). The PA was adopted in 2016 during COP 22 as a new legally binding framework for an internationally coordinated effort to tackle climate change. It outlines key commitments towards climate change mitigation and adaptation (Streck et al., 2016 and Ecbi, 2018). In 2018 in Katowice, parties set themselves the goal of adopting a series of implementing decisions which comprised the Paris Agreement Working Program (PAWP) also known as the Paris Agreement rule book. The Paris Agreement rule book is a prerequisite for ensuring that the Paris Agreement can meet its potential, and that progress towards its long-term goals can be tracked over time (C2ES, 2018). Member countries pledge their actions towards the achievement of the Paris Agreement goal using an approach known as the “Nationally Determined Contributions” (NDC) which is binding under Article 4.2 of the PA and are obliged to communicate progress of the implementation of NDCs every 5 years as stipulated in Article 4.8 and 4.9 of the PA (UNFCCC Paris Agreement). The advent of the PA was because of the repeated failure of the Kyoto Protocol (KP). Unlike the KP, the PA does not set emission reduction targets for individual parties, rather, it formulates an overall climate change goal (as stipulated in Article 2) and invites parties to contribute to this goal while leaving it up to them to determine how and to what extent they want to contribute (Streck et al., 2016).

In terms of evolution, Parties decided during COP19 in Warsaw, that in the context of the UNFCCC's determination to adopt a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all Parties at its twenty-first session (December 2015) and for it to come into effect and be implemented from 2020. In addition, governments agreed to intensify or initiate preparations of their intended nationally determined contributions (INDC) to meet the ultimate objective of the convention to be submitted in March 2015. (Ecbi, 2018 and CAN, 2017). According to CAN (2017), INDCs were individual contributions determined at national level with the ultimate objective of not exceeding the 1.5—degree threshold of UNFCCC. In the Lima call for action of COP 20, it was further reiterated that member states submit their INDCs. While the Paris Agreement was adopted during COP 21, the INDCs submitted were welcomed while calling on those who have not submitted to submit. After ratifying the PA member states were requested to communicate more concrete actions towards maintaining global temperatures below the UNFCCC 1.5-degree threshold. The INDCs received from parties before the ratification of the PA were considered as their first NDC while parties who had not submitted INDCs were going to submit their NDCs.

In parallel to the PA, world leaders also adopted the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development with the objective to produce a set of universal goals to meet the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing the world. These goals were born at the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro

(UNDP, no date). The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the NDC commitments of the 2030 agenda for sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement respectively, represent a great potential for synergies and complementarity (Ecbi, 2018). The former is a voluntary agreement endorsed by the world's leaders at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in 2015 while the latter is an agreement reached by UNFCCC parties, which is a legally binding international treaty even though the NDC in itself is not legally binding (UN-DESA, 2019). Implementing NDC is not only targeted at SDG 13 (climate change) as wrongly thought (Ecbi, 2018). An analysis by the Climate Change Secretariat on the NDCs of Developing countries revealed a high percentage addressing SDG 2,7,9,13, and 17 while a lower percentage addressed SDG 1, 10 and 16 (UN-DESA, 2019).

Forests are highlighted as the main Green House Gas (GHG) sink/reservoirs to be protected and enhanced. Parties are encouraged to take actions in the implementation and support of activities relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management and enhancement of forest carbon stock in developing countries (PA Article 4.1&2). By encouraging Parties to support existing frameworks for REDD+, the PA thereby endorses previous UNFCCC decisions on REDD+, from the Cancun Safeguards to the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ (Streck et al., 2016). This takes into consideration mitigation and adaptation efforts for sustainable forest management. Thirty percent (30%) of the world's land are covered with forest which provide humanity and nature with basic ecosystem services and resources at local, national, regional and global scale (MEA, 2005). Therefore, one can comfortably ascertain that the contribution of the forest cuts across almost all the UN-SDGs and particularly addressed in SDG 15 '*Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss*' (Sotirov et al, 2020). The forest sector globally represents the world's most important carbon sink with an estimated 77% of all carbon stored in vegetation (GIZ, 2017). Unfortunately, forest, land use and land-use change, contributed to about 23% of anthropogenic GHG emissions from 2007 to 2016¹, mostly caused by deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries in the tropical belt (IPCC, 2014 and Federici et al., 2015)

The importance of the forest sector to meet global and national ambitions including the PA, is demonstrated by the UN General Assembly's adoption of the first ever United Nations Strategic Plans for the Forest for 2017-2030 in April 2017 which forged the special session of the United Nations Forest Forum in January 2017. This strategy defined 6 goals and 26 associated targets to support international forest-related arrangements, instruments and processes (UNFF, 2019). Other international forest arrangements include inter alia:

- The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN-FAO) Committee on Forestry (COFO) which brings together heads of forest services and other senior government officials to identify emerging policy and technical issues, to seek

¹ <https://unfccc.int/topics/land-use/workstreams/land-use--land-use-change-and-forestry-lulucf>

solutions and to advise FAO and others on appropriate action. The Conference of Parties (COPs) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) instituted the United Nations Forest Forum (UNFF) to pilot key discussions on forest issues. Discussions during the 2019 UNFCCC session focused on how the UNFF can contribute to international forest governance and promote sustainable forest management (SFM)),

- The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) brought into play the Great Green Wall Initiative to restore degraded lands with Africa as a major area for implementation.

Despite the recognized global importance, the forest sector has continuously witnessed increasing conversion to other land uses and degradation (FAO, 2018). Many International Forest Governance and Policy Arrangements (IFGAs) have been developed to strengthen the protection and sustainable management of forest. However, it is evident that these arrangements are limited in effectively addressing the forest issues given the increasing trends of deforestation and forest degradation; and the global community is far from attaining agreed sustainable development targets (Sotirov et al, 2020 and Pokorny et al, 2019). According to the Governance of Forest Initiative indicator framework, in the international development context, good governance is a critical base for attaining positive, environmental and economic outcomes in this case within the forest sector (GFI no date). Good forest governance is often associated with accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, equity, participation and transparency order to achieve positive social, environmental and economic outcomes, which corroborates with the transparency and accountability mechanisms of the PA. It is often characterized by forest tenure security, benefit sharing and proper coordination across government structures responsible for forest management (Orsini et al., 2013; Rayner et al., 2010; Yitagesu, 2016 and NYDF Assessment Partners, 2018).). Conversely, poor forest governance at the institutional level is characterized by weak enforcement of government legislation within a country's forestry sector (Cerutti & Tacconi, 2006; Alemagi & Kozak, 2010; Dkamela, 2011).

According to Buce et al. (2018), in Africa, most countries with significant forest cover experience increasing pressure on forest and forest related resources. To remedy this, these countries have developed several initiatives both at national and regional levels such as, the Forest Convergence Plan (FCP) by the Central African Commission (COMIFAC) and the West African Forest Strategy, with the common goal of addressing the challenges and to regulate abusive exploitation of the forest as well as support the economic and social development plans of these regions in the face of existing and new challenges. These countries, after ratifying the Paris Agreement, included in their NDCs commitments which will have to take into consideration the role of forest governance and other policy instruments (such as national forestry policies) that are need to ensure sustainable forest and ecosystem management at national level (Buce et al., 2018).

The African Forest Forum (AFF) is a pan-African non-governmental organization with the goal of providing a platform and creating an enabling environment for independent and objective analysis, advocacy and advice on relevant policy and technical issues pertaining to achieving sustainable management, use and conservation of Africa's forest

and tree resources as part of efforts to eradicate poverty, promote gender equality, and economic and social development. In support of international and regional efforts, AFF is implementing since 2011 a project on **“African Forests, People and Climate Change”** which will contribute to strengthening the capacity of Africa’s forests to adapt to climate change and mitigation efforts. As part of this project the AFF conducted a study in Africa which will provide information to enhance national forest governance to respond to the Paris Agreement (PA) and related global climate change policies and initiatives. This study therefore focusses on assessing the contribution of the existing national forest governance-based initiatives to the NDCs of West and Central African countries, their response to the Paris Agreement and how this can be improved.

1.2 Description of the objectives

The overall objective of this study was to undertake an in-depth study that could provide information to enhance national forest governance to respond to the Paris Agreement (PA) and related global climate change policies and initiatives in countries in Central and West Africa. The study was expected to generate knowledge that could enable African forestry stakeholders in Central and West Africa to have better understanding and coordination on their national forestry sectors in the context of the International Arrangements on Forests (IAF) and relevant SDGs.

Specifically, this study sought to:

- Assess forest governance in the selected case study countries to help forest stakeholders respond to the PA and related global climate change policies and initiatives; and
- Assess national forest sector contribution to NDCs in the selected case study countries.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 An overview of the methodology

The methods employed for this assignment entailed 3 main stages:

Desk Study: To accomplish the objectives of this study, secondary data was collected from existing literature. This included published scientific articles, policy documents, published reports, framework plans, and programs related to forest governance. A synthetic evaluation of this secondary information was conducted and used to complement primary data collected from the field. Examples included the Paris Agreement, the United Nation Global strategy on forest, UNFCCC Reports, national forest laws, policies and frameworks, the COMIFAC Convergence Plan on forest etc. Specifically, an evaluation of data from secondary sources was conducted. These sources included government legislation, policies, plans, and programs related to forest governance, the Paris Agreement, and other related global climate change policies and initiatives in the case study countries. Data from relevant peer reviewed literature was also collected and evaluated to obtain further insight into forest governance and the Paris Agreement in the selected case study countries.

The data collection tool (questionnaire) was divided into 3 main sections. Section I focused on general information of the respondent. Section 2 focused on collecting information on response to Paris Agreement and related climate policies and initiatives.

This included:

- Rating on clarity and coherence of related frameworks and policies, transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, effectiveness, efficiency and equitability,
- Overlap and synergy in the forest sector and related global and regional climate change related policies and initiatives,
- Knowledge gaps and skills among African forestry stakeholders in mainstreaming global and regional climate change policies and initiatives into national forestry sector and,
- The capacity gaps in reporting forest-based plans and activities.

Section II focused on information on national forest sector contribution to NDCs. It included:

- Gaps in the development of national forest sector and REDD+ contribution to NDCs,
- Integrating forest-based adaptation and mitigation activities and initiatives in NDCs and,
- Lessons learned in the development and implementation of the 1st forest based NDC in Africa.

Field Study: Given the constraint on time and resources, countries were selected in each of Central Africa and West African Regions for field visit. Seven countries were

selected to represent the maximum forest cover within each region. For Central Africa, the countries included: Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Republic of Congo; and for West Africa, they included: Mali, Gambia, Benin and Liberia. Primary data were collected through interviews with relevant forest actors in these countries including civil society (national and international NGOs) working on forest governance, local forest dependent communities, government officials, forest related programs/projects heads, Country NDC focal point, donor agencies, research institutions, the private sector (logging companies) (Appendix 2). Interviews were conducted in September 2019 in French and English. To reduce the occurrence of biased responses, interviewers avoided leading the interviewees during the interviews (see Kvale 1996; Ammenberg 2003; Alemagi et al. 2012) and reacted in a neutral manner by not signalling or providing their preferred answers (Ammenberg 2003). The interview approach included, face-to-face, group discussion during field visits and by email. A target specific sampling approach was used to permit the identification of stakeholders who can provide relevant information to the study.

Reporting: The data collected (both qualitative and quantitative) was cleaned and quantitative data was subjected to simple descriptive statistical analysis using SPSS Version 24.0 and MS Excel 2010. Graphs and tables were generated and used to develop the following key deliverables:

- A report of least 40-pages on the task.
- At least two journal articles to be published together with staff at Secretariat who will get involved in this work.
- A draft policy brief and a fact sheet to be finalized together with the staff at Secretariat who will get involved in this work.

2.2 Case study countries

This study covered the Central and West African regions, specifically, Central Africa: Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Republic of Congo and West Africa: Mali, Gambia, Benin, and Liberia

The respective governments of the above-mentioned countries have introduced a series of forest policy reforms to promote more sustainable and equitable management of their forests. In addition, all these countries are member states and have ratified the UNFCCC Paris Agreement. In Cameroon for example, in view of making forest management more participatory and transparent, the reforms as contained in Law N0. 94/01 of 20th January 1994 (which is currently under review) made provisions for community and council forests, the allocation of a portion of forest royalties to municipalities as well as local and indigenous communities (RoC, 1994), and a public bidding system for the allocation of timber harvesting permits, stipulated in Decree N0. 95-531-PM of 23rd August 1995 (MINEF, 1996; Alemagi et al. 2014).

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Republic of Congo have both taken a series of steps geared at promoting sustainable forest management. For instance, the Community Forest Resource Management Programme (CFRM) has been piloted in the

DRC. In addition, the discussions are ongoing in the country on the elaboration of a forest law.

Furthermore, these seven countries were selected because despite forestry reforms in the countries, the rate of deforestation and forest degradation remain very high. FRA (2020) reported average annual deforestation rates between 2010-2020 in selected countries in Central Africa as follows: Cameroon – 0.27, Democratic Republic of Congo - 0.83%, Republic of Congo-0.06%.

The west African region is marked with rich wildlife and forest biodiversity. The 15 member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are home to about 66.85 million ha of forest, constituting 13% of the total land cover. The forest serves as a major source of livelihood and resources such as fuel wood, timber, etc, to about 234000 million people in the ECOWAS Region (Felicani-Robles and Woolnough, 2019). Even though the forest provides these benefits, the rate of deforestation and forest degradation across west Africa was more than 0.59 from 2010 to 2020, which corresponds to about 1 862 000 ha per year. Unsustainable agriculture was identified to be the main driver of deforestation in most countries and forest expansion accounts for 73% of deforestation (FAO, 2020). For example, countries such as Guinea, Liberia, Benin and Sierra Leone have experienced a growth in agricultural landcover while seeing a net loss in forest cover (FAO, 2016²). The continuation of a high rate of deforestation largely reflects the combined impacts of high population growth and the need to sustain livelihoods with small-scale agriculture (FAO, 2020). Of special interest are countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone which are part of the Upper Guinean Rainforest, a key biodiversity hotspot which is highly fragmented and experiences significant pressure from anthropogenic influences and unsustainable practices (Felicani-Robles and Woolnough, 2019). According to FAO (2020), between 2010 and 2020, the rate of deforestation in the selected case study countries in West Africa were as follows: Mali-0.0%, Gambia - 2.10%, Benin-1.47%, Liberia-0.39%. In Mali, the forest sector is governed by the National Policy for Resource Management (no. 95-004). This law governing management of forest resources replaced the forest code of 1986³ as the country evolved to a democratic system of government. There has been a general increase in deforestation rate in most these countries with the exception of Mali. In Benin, sacred forests were added as a category of Benin's protected areas legislation (Inter-Ministerial Order No. 0121/MEHU/ MDGLAAT/DC/SGM/DGFRN/SA of 16 Nov. 2012) to maintain important ecological clusters and help deter further habitat fragmentation, as these were exposed to deforestation and degradation. The legislation is the first of its kind in Africa and provides legitimacy for traditional beliefs and activities involving the forest as well as lending cultural support for forest conservation (World Bank, 2020). This contributes to the country's efforts stipulated by Act No. 2002-16 of 18 October 2004 on the wildlife regime and its implementing decrees.

² FAO, State of the World's Forests, 2016

³ <https://pubs.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/G00259.pdf>

3. RESULTS

A total of 48 respondents were interviewed in 3 countries in Central Africa and 4 in West Africa as illustrated in Figure 1. For some countries, such as the Republic of Congo (RoC) and Mali it was difficult to establish contacts before the field visit. Also, due to unavailability of some respondents at the time of the interview, administrative procedures to get respondents to be interviewed and the limited time allocated for some countries such as in Congo Brazzaville, only a limited number of respondents could be interviewed. Overall, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Liberia had the highest number of respondents 10 (20.8%) followed by Cameroon 8 (16.7%) and then Benin and Gambia 7(14.6%) each. The RoC had the lowest response of 2 (4.2%) and in Mali data was successfully collected from 4 respondents (8.3%). The results of the data collected from the field visits are presented in the following sections (Sections 3.1 and 3.2)

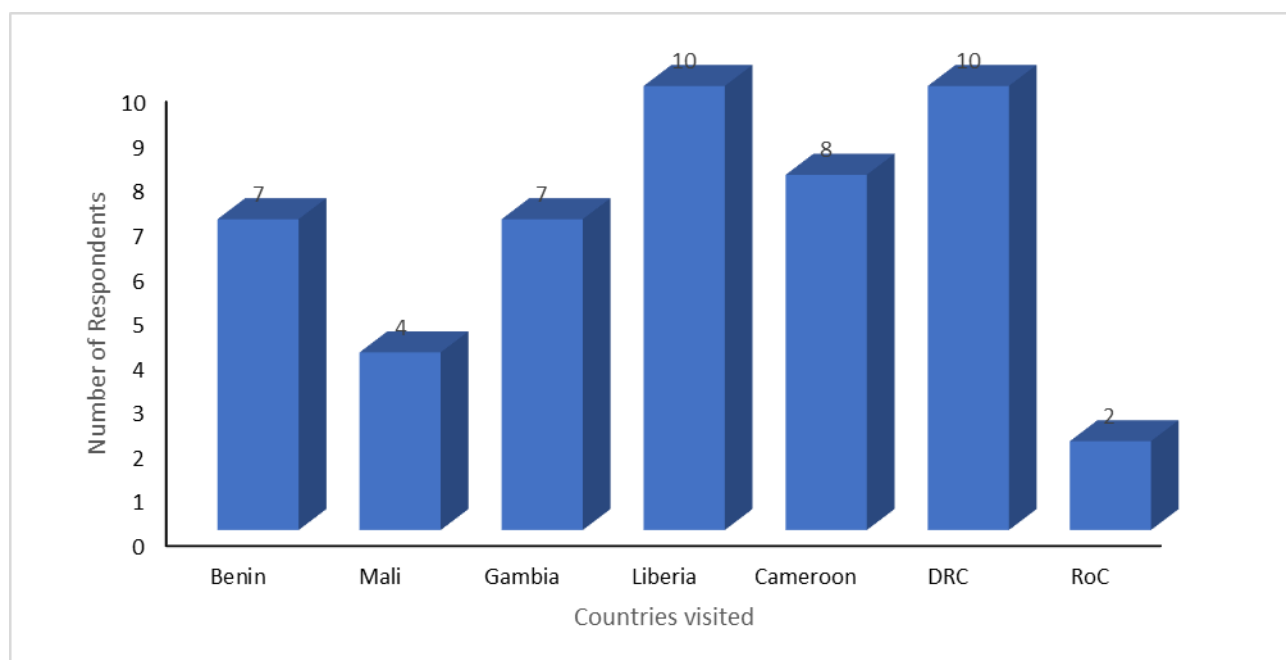


Figure 1: Countries visited and contribution to the total response pool.

3.1 On response to Paris Agreement and related global climate change policies and initiatives

3.1.1. Assessment of Forest governance in the selected case study countries in West and Central Africa

Different components were generated from the 6 principles of good forest governance (transparency, accountability, participation, coordination, efficiency and capacity) to assess the level of application in the sampled countries. Respondents were assessed on the clarity and coherence of forest policies, legal, institutional, and regulatory

frameworks; transparency, accountability and inclusiveness of forest processes and institutions; and effectiveness, efficiency and equitability in the implementation of forest policies, legal and regulatory frameworks. The following paragraphs details the outcome of the assessment.

For the coherence and clarity of forest policies, legal institutional and regulatory framework in the selected case study countries in Figure 2 , 38% of respondents expressed strong agreement for recognition of customary and traditional rights; 33% clarity and coherence in policies and laws and 31% for provisions and mechanisms for equity sharing (Figure 2). Most of them (40%) partly agreed that there was clarity and coherence in policy, legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks for forest governance and recognitions and protection for forest related property rights including who has the ownership of the carbon in the countries. 19% of respondents disagreed that there were provisions and mechanisms for equity sharing while 15% believe that there was poor coherence and clarity on concordance on broader development policies with forest policies (15%) and clarity of mutual forest related mandate (15%)

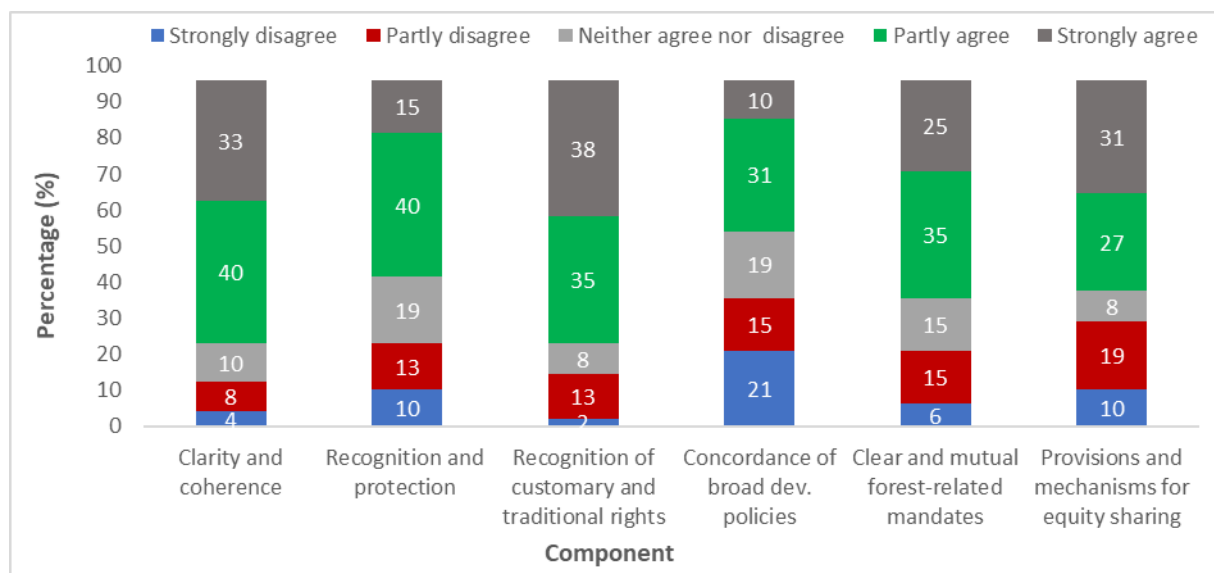


Figure 2: Clarity and coherence in policy, legal, institutional, and regulatory frameworks in Central and West Africa

Similarly, for transparency, accountability and inclusivity of forest processes and institutions, four components were considered as indicated in Figure 3. 35% of respondents strongly agree to the legal framework making provisions for opportunities for public participation and the support for transparency and accountability (25%) such as public access to information, transparency in the allocation of timber and non-timber forest products concessions, permits and user rights etc. Most of the respondents (38%) partly agreed that there are effective and independent governmental oversight mechanisms external to forest agency while 29% directed their partial accord to adequacy of the capacity of civil society organizations, indigenous people and small & medium enterprises to participate and engage in forest-related planning, decision-making and implementation of legal forest provisions.

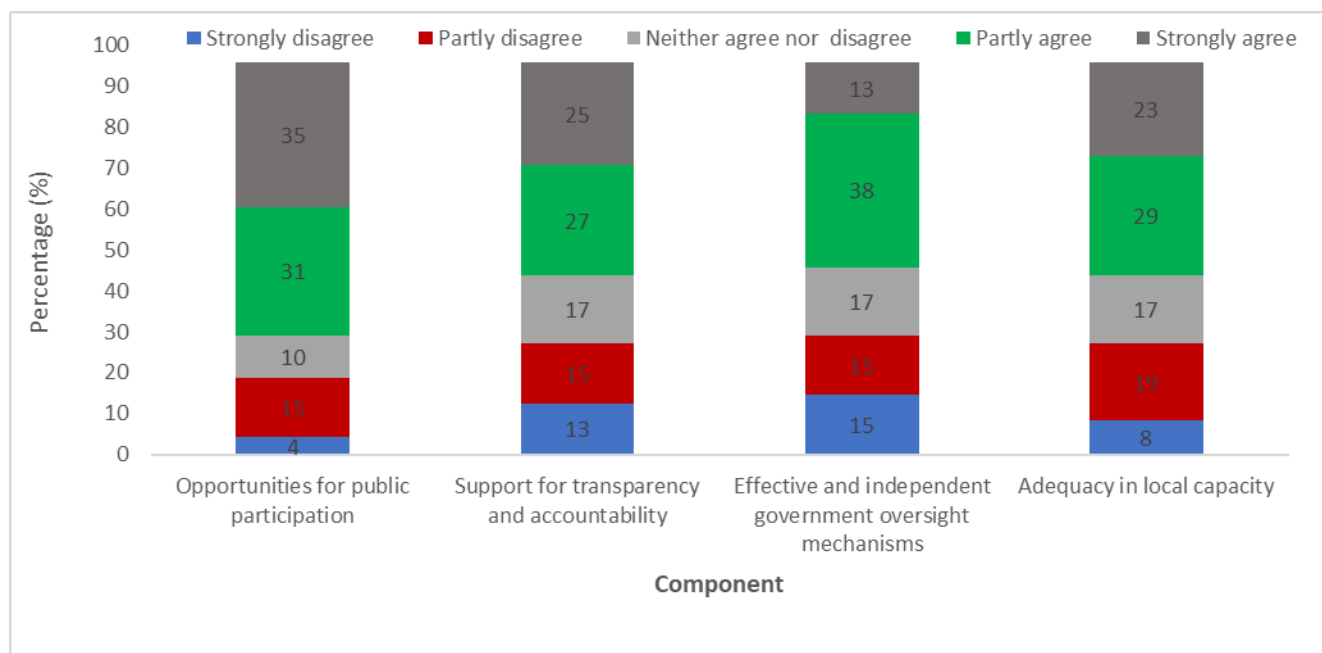


Figure 3: Transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness regarding forest policy implementation in West and Central Africa

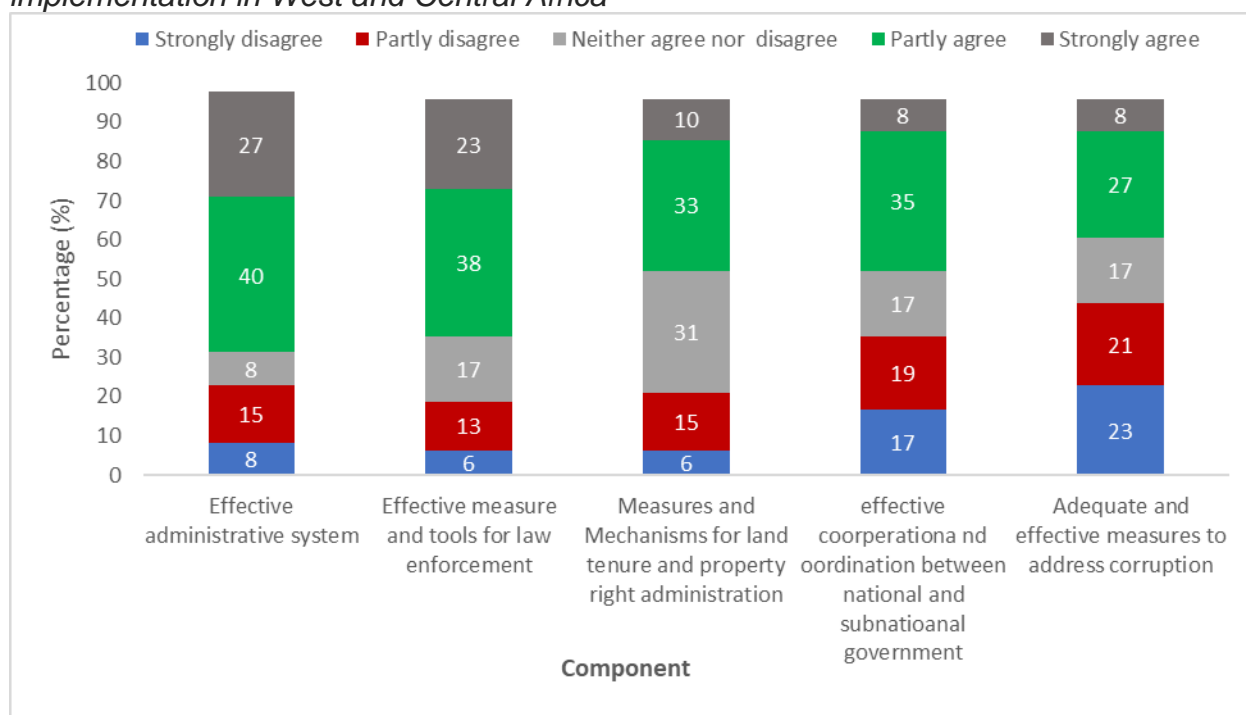


Figure 4: Effectiveness, efficiency, and equitability in the implementation of forest policies, legal and regulatory frameworks in West and Central Africa

On the effectiveness, efficiency and equitability in the implementation of forest policies, legal and regulatory frameworks, 5 components were assessed as indicated in Figure 4. It was observed that most of respondents (partly agreed to their countries having effective administration of forest resources (25%), the existence of national measures

and tools for effective forest law enforcement (38%), measures and mechanisms for land tenure and property right (33%), effective coordination between national and subnational government on forest initiatives (35%), and adequate and effective measures to address corruption in the forest sector (27%). However, strong agreement was observed for those who strongly agreed to the existence of effective administrative system (27%) and the existence of effective measures and tools for law enforcement (23%). 23% of the respondents strongly believe that corruption is still a major issue to be addressed in the forest sector of their countries while only 8% strongly agreed that adequate and effective measure have been put in place to address corruption issues.

3.1.2. Forestry initiatives and climate change related policies in Central and West African countries

Sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 focuses on checking the existence of forest and climate related initiatives at national level and the country's involvement in related initiatives at regional and global level, and existing barriers and synergies in their implementation. Some expected examples were:

Forest code, policies, laws and frameworks; National climate change strategies and plans, Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), National REDD+ strategy etc, at national level; Regional initiatives such as Regional REDD+ etc, and involvement in global initiatives such as the UNFCCC Paris Agreement, United Nations Convention on Biodiversity, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) etc. A summary on forest policies, programs, plans, as well as other climate change related policies and initiatives in the selected case study countries is presented in Annex 4.

At national level, the forest and climate related initiatives identified by respondents in the targeted counties generally included forest and environmental laws, policies, regulations, strategies, programs and projects put in place by the government and partners of these countries. The objectives of the laws, policies, and frameworks are to ensure order and sustainable management of the forest sector as well as demonstrate efforts toward environmental and natural resource management and protection. Some of the legal tools were created to meet particular needs of the government, for example, the Cameroon's 1994 Forestry and Wildlife law was aimed at involving communities in the management and protection of forest resources⁴. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) the policies on conservation and creation of national parks were to ensure the protection of certain biodiversity (flora and fauna) such as the bonobo chimpanzee (Taylor, 2011). In Liberia the aim of the 2006 forest reform was to conserve and sustainably manage all forest areas so that they will continue to produce a complete range of goods and services for the benefit of all Liberians and contribute to poverty alleviation in the nation⁵ (National Forest Authority, 2007).

Generally, the initiatives identified were similar across the countries which included but not limited to:

⁴ <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/1216.pdf>

⁵ http://wri-sites.s3.amazonaws.com/forest-atlas.org/lbr_forest-atlas.org/resources/Documents/National%20Forest%20Management%20Strategy.pdf

- Forest and environmental related laws, policies, strategies and plans, frameworks, programs and projects such as the Benin national law on environment, the national REDD+ Strategy of DRC, the national climate change adaptation plan of action of Cameroon, the agriculture and forest policy of Gambia, etc.
- Nationally Determine Contributions (NDC) to demonstrate countries' plans towards the implementation of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement
- Forest and climate change related programs and projects such as REDD+ initiatives of DRC, Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) projects common in the Central African Countries, Voluntary Partnership Agreement/ EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (VPA/FLEGT) projects of Cameroon, etc.

Regionally initiatives included the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) convergence plan on forest which includes all the 10 member states; Treaty on the conservation and sustainable management of forest ecosystems in Central Africa and establishing COMIFAC, Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI); West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change; The Great Green Wall for Sahara and Sahel Initiative; Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) Forest policy; Inter State Permanent Committee to combat desertification (CILSS); Common Policy on Environmental Amelioration of West African States; Agenda 2063 of the African Union etc.

Global initiatives included: the UNFCCC Paris Agreement ratified by all counties in West and Central Africa; United Nations Convention on Biodiversity; United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); AFR100; and Declarations of principles of the United Nations on Forest Ecosystems among others.

Respondents identified barriers in implementing forest and climate change related initiatives in their countries which were grouped into 8 main categories: limited technical and institutional capacity; poor implementation of legal arrangements; limited financial resources; limited technical and institutional capacity; poor coordination across stakeholder sectors and institutions; lack of an effective legal instrument; poor political will; corruption and poor alignment of national vision and realities (Figure 5). Limited financial (25%), technical and institutional capacity (16%) were identified as key barrier in implementing climate and forest related initiatives. The aspects of poor coordination and collaboration across stakeholder sectors and relevant institutions was also identified as an important barrier (16%). Respondents also indicated that there are legal instruments but are poorly implemented (12%). Some barriers identified were not very common across the countries but will be helpful in the effective implementation of forest and climate change initiatives. They included the lack of government drive (11%) in promoting effective implementation (political will). In addition, respondents indicated that there is limited access to forest and climate change information (5%). In some countries such as DRC, it was identified that there is lack of an effective legal instrument (5%) for the forest sector (no forest law) and in other countries (5%) such as Cameroon, the forest law (1994) does not reflect the realities on the ground. However, the country is in the process of reviewing the 1994 law to ensure alignment with current national, regional and global trends.

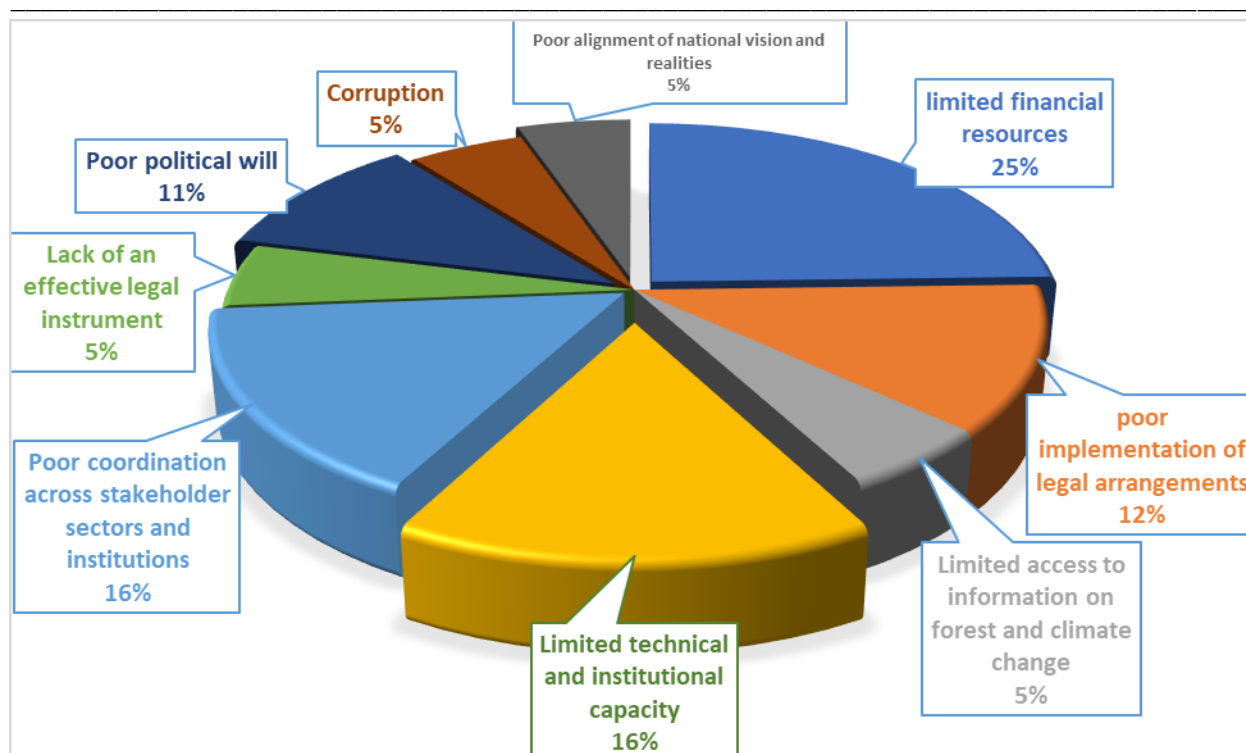


Figure 5: Barriers in the implementation of forest and climate initiatives in west and central African countries

3.1.3. Areas of overlap and synergy in the national forestry sector in response to global and regional climate change related policies and initiatives

In the Central African region, although governments are making considerable efforts, their actions and commitments still need to be visibly strengthened through adopting integrated climate change policy options, the submission of the REDD+ Readiness Preparation Proposal (RPP) and National Action Plans for Climate Change Adaptation to the UNFCCC is expected to “position” them for future access to climate change financing for addressing synergy challenges at the national level.

Major policy documents in the forestry sector in the selected case study countries pay little attention to climate change. For example, in Cameroon the 1994 forest law, 1995 forest policy, 1996 framework law on environment, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), 1999 agricultural policy etc, pay little attention to climate change. Except for the REDD+ Readiness Preparation Proposal (RPP) and the National Communication (NC1), sectoral policies in the forestry sector, as well as laws and strategies are void of tangible reference to climate change but make provisions for some activities that directly or indirectly address climate change (Ngum et al., 2019). Although there is no specific law on climate change in Cameroon, the 1996 framework law on environment sets a basis for all environmental policies including steps taken to reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. According to this framework law, “every person shall have a right to a healthy environment, the protection and improvement of which shall be the duty of the state and every citizen”. Furthermore, the forest law and policy oblige the state to “protect the national forest heritage” (Part II section 11) which will contribute to sustaining the potential of the forest in addition to regeneration and reforestation

efforts". The interpretation of these has been stretched to include carbon sequestration and thus climate change.

In the Republic of Congo, the Forest Code is based on two existing Congolese laws⁶: Law No. 14-2009 amending certain provisions of Law No. 16-2000 on the Forestry Code and Law No. 16-2000 on the Forestry Code. The forest code does not take into consideration provisions to support REDD+ project development and carbon ownership in addition to gaps related to sustainable forest management and social inclusion. This triggered Congolese civil societies to put forth concerns on the objectives of the Forest Code and the inadequacy of its definitions, classification process, decommissioning and management in 2014⁷. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the 2002 Forest Code No 011/2002 is the main legislation⁸ regulating the forest sector in DRC. There are no provisions on supporting climate change initiatives such as REDD+ although the country has embarked on many REDD+ and climate initiatives. There is therefore the need to update the forest code and put in place a forest policy.

Climate change is not captured in the forestry subsector policy (2010-2019) and the 1998 forest act of the Gambia. However, the government is engaged in international efforts to implement climate related conventions which the country has ratified, though faced with the challenge of appropriate financial resources (Baldeh, 2018). These efforts include the draft Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) policy (2017- 2026) and the National Forestry Strategy (2019 – 2028) which identifies several priorities related to management of forest resources, as well as the development of: *i) value chains for forest products; ii) opportunities for private sector and CSO partnership; and iii) REDD+ projects*. In Benin, the forest sector is considered as an important sector towards meeting the NDC. The country has targeted to Increase the capacity of carbon sequestration of the country's forest ecosystems through the implementation of sustainable natural forests development.

3.1.4. Knowledge gaps and skills among African forestry stakeholders in mainstreaming of global and regional climate change policies and initiatives into national forestry policies, plans and activities, and their coordination.

Respondents provided a list of actors in their countries that are involved in the development, implementation and mainstreaming global initiatives and processes into national forest and climate change policies and this is depicted in

⁶ <https://forestlegality.org/risk-tool/country/republic-congo>

⁷ <https://clientearth.azurewebsites.net/reports/rapport-d-analyse-et-contributions-au-draft-de-code-forestier-pgdf-clientearth-nov-2013.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20economique/Code%20Forestier/rdc-loiforets.pdf>

Table 1

Table 1: Actors involved in the development, implementation and mainstreaming global initiatives into national forest and climate change policies.

Countries	Actors involved in the development of climate change policies.	Actors involved on implementation of forest policies.	Actors involved on implementation of climate change policies.	Actors involved on mainstreaming of global and regional initiatives and processes relevant to forestry.	Actors involved on mainstreaming of global and regional initiatives and processes relevant to climate change.
Liberia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public institutions - International agencies - Private actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO/CSO - Public institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Private actors - International agencies
Gambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public institutions - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public institutions - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public institutions - International agencies
Mali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - Public institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies
Benin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO/CSO - Public institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - International agencies

Countries	Actors involved in the development of climate change policies.	Actors involved on implementation of forest policies.	Actors involved on implementation of climate change policies.	Actors involved on mainstreaming of global and regional initiatives and processes relevant to forestry.	Actors involved on mainstreaming of global and regional initiatives and processes relevant to climate change.
Democratic Republic of Congo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies
Republic of Congo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies
Cameroon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO/CSO - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies

* NGO = Non- Governmental Organizations.

*CSO = Civil Society Organizations.

The status as regards knowledge and skills on mainstreaming global and regional climate change policies and initiatives into national forestry policies in Central and West Africa is presented in Figure 6. Results indicate that: institutional capacity to undertake forest inventory and negotiation was 14.6%; negotiation skills for technical expertise in forestry and Climate Change was (14.6%) and knowledge in national representatives in related global initiatives and processes (12.5%). Most respondents rated their knowledge on several aspects as good. More than 35% of respondents rated their knowledge as good for: understanding of the development of climate change policies (37.5%), institutional capacity to undertake forest inventory (35.5%), institutional capacity for climate change and forest policy reforms (37.5%) and knowledge of national representatives in related global initiatives and policies (50%). However, some respondents also expressed limited or lack of knowledge in aspects such as knowledge on contextualizing global decision on climate change (35.4%), institutional capacity in developing integrated policy framework (25%), institutional capacity for climate change for forest policy reforms (29.2%) and institutional capacity for M&E mainstreaming in other sectors (27.1%).

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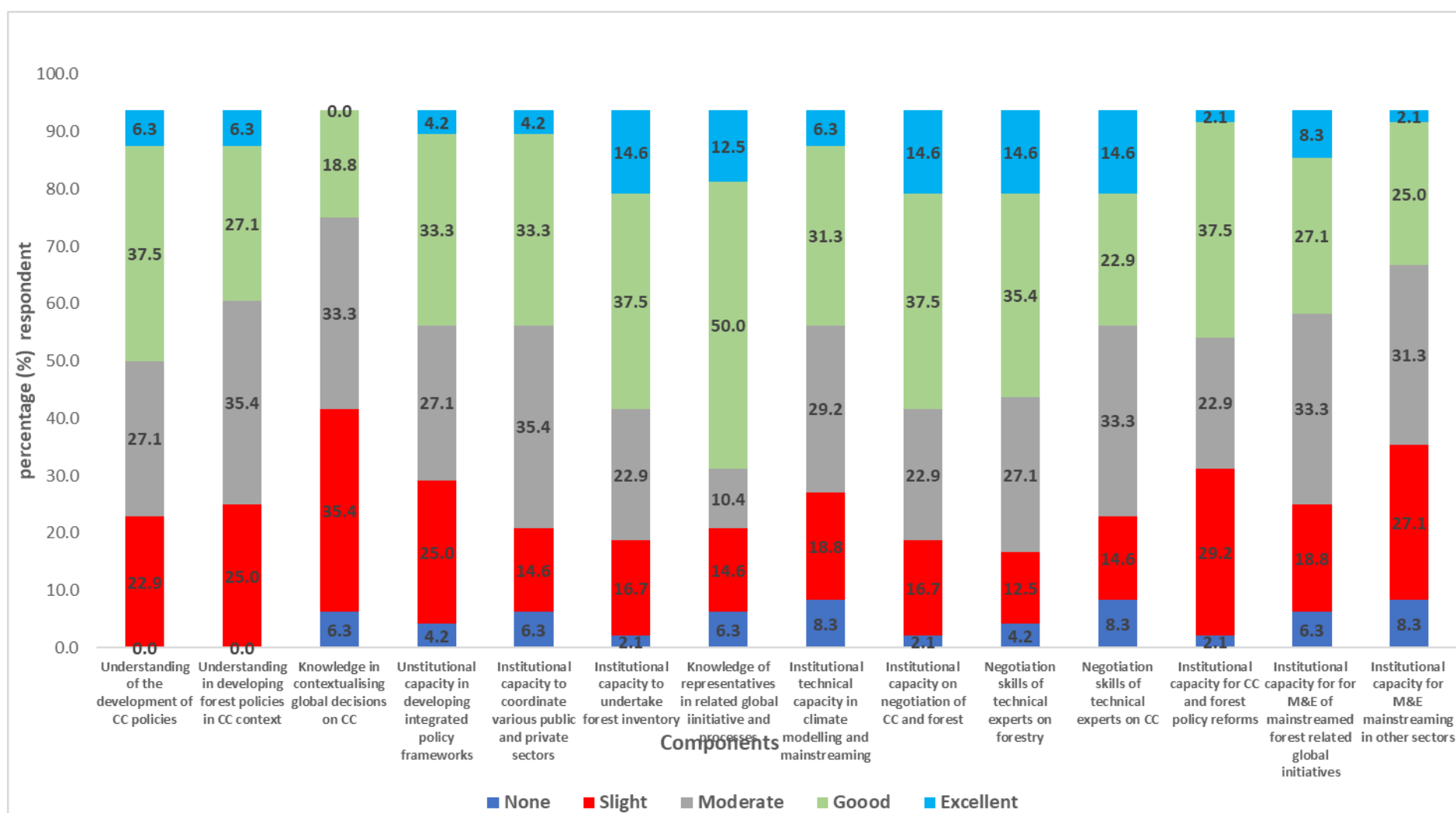


Figure 6: Knowledge and skills on mainstreaming global and regional climate change policies and initiatives into national forestry policies in Central and West Africa

Majority of respondents (77%) stated that they were aware of the Paris Agreement. They further asserted that they understood the meaning of mainstreaming regional and global policies and initiatives in national policies and programs. Some respondents (20%) in the DRC, the Republic of Congo and Cameroon believed the regional framework that has been mainstreamed into national policies and local programs included the COMIFAC Convergence Plan. They stated that this framework is mainstreamed at the local level through the development of relevant Council Development plan and restoration of forest land. One respondent in Liberia alluded to the fact that the existing global initiatives that the country is currently mainstreaming into national forest and climate change policies is the Paris Agreement. The respondent stated that international agencies were responsible for the development of this initiative while public institutions and relevant NGO/CSO were responsible for mainstreaming. In the same vein, a respondent in the Gambia also stated that the country was mainstreaming the Great Green Wall (GGW) for Sahara and Sahel Initiative (an African partnership to tackle desertification and land degradation) into national forest and climate change policies. The GGW aims to support efforts of local communities in the sustainable management and use of forest and other natural resources in drylands and seeks to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Sahel and the Sahara⁹. The respondent opined that the Ministry of Environment Climate Change and Natural Resources and the Forestry Department were responsible for this mainstreaming. In the DRC, the Republic of Congo and Cameroon, 55% of the respondents stated that global initiatives that the countries were currently mainstreaming are REDD+ and the Paris Agreement. According to them, public institutions were responsible for mainstreaming these climate change initiatives. One respondent in Liberia stated that a regional framework that has been mainstreamed into national policies and local programs is the GGW for Sahel and the Sahara. This respondent noted that this framework is mainstreamed at the national level by aligning some of its policy strategies with those of the national frameworks. Another respondent in the Gambia declared that the Regional Climate Change Adaptation program is an example of a regional framework that has been mainstreamed into national policies in the country. This respondent stated that this framework is mainstreamed at the national level by capacity building of experts of relevant government sectors and assigned to integrate adaptation actions into their various sector policies.

Examples of opportunities that can be obtained as a result of mainstreaming regional and global frameworks into national policies and local programs as reported by the respondents included the following: enhancing the sustainable management of natural resources, good communication plan, good forest governance, capacity building, upscaling REDD+ and other initiatives that have been piloted, institutional strengthening, and procurement of bilateral funds. Most respondents believed lack of government engagement (37.5%) followed by limited financing (29.2%) and understanding (18.8%) were the main challenges in mainstreaming regional and global frameworks into national policies and local program (Figure 7).

⁹ <http://www.fao.org/3/ap603e/ap603e.pdf>

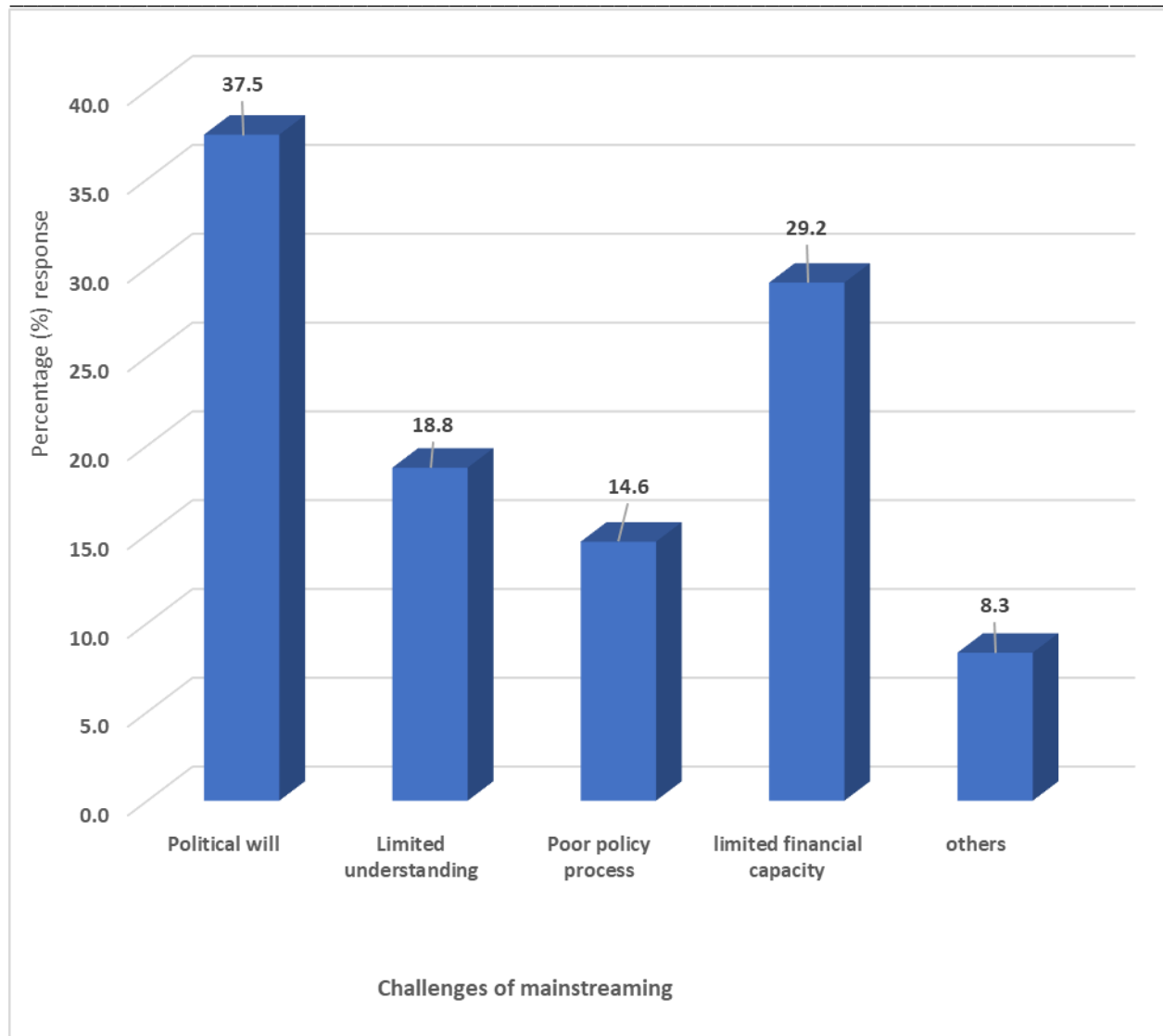


Figure 7: The main challenges in mainstreaming regional and global frameworks into national policies and local program

The different stakeholder sectors in the case study countries which constitute the organizations in charge of development, decision making and implementing forest-related rules, policies, strategies and legislation are presented in Table 2. The role of these stakeholder groups varies from one country to the other, for example in Cameroon, NGOs, CSOs and public institutions contribute to decision making while in Liberia, international organisations also play this role.

Table 2: Stakeholders in charge of developing, deciding and implementing forest-related rules, policies, strategies and legislation.

Countries	Stakeholder responsible for the development of forest-related rules, policies, strategies and legislation	Stakeholders responsible Decision making on forest-related rules, policies, strategies and legislation	Stakeholders responsible for the implementation of forest-related rules, policies, strategies and legislation
Democratic Republic of Congo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors
Republic of Congo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies
Cameroon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies
Liberia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies
Gambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies
Mali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public institution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies

Countries	Stakeholder responsible for the development of forest-related rules, policies, strategies and legislation	Stakeholders responsible Decision making on forest-related rules, policies, strategies and legislation	Stakeholders responsible for the implementation of forest-related rules, policies, strategies and legislation
Benin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - International agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public institution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local forest communities - NGO/CSO, - Public institutions - Private actors - International agencies

- NGO-Non-Governmental Organisations
- CSO- Civil Society Organisation

Table 3 presents mechanism for stakeholder involvement in forest policy arrangements in the target countries. Most respondent (83%) believed the same actors or stakeholders as in Table 2 are involved in ensuring that relevant global initiatives and processes are integrated into the forest sector. Apart from Mali, respondents in the case study countries provided the mechanisms that are used for stakeholder consultation, participation, implementation, and monitoring of forest policies (Table 3). 46% of the respondents agreed that these stakeholder groups have the capacity of engaging in the policy process.

Table 3 : Mechanisms used for stakeholder consultation, participation, implementation, and monitoring of forest policies.

Countries	Mechanism for stakeholder consultation	Mechanism for stakeholder participation	Mechanism for stakeholder implementation	Mechanism for stakeholder monitoring
Democratic Republic of Congo	Multi-disciplinary council, national consultation council for the forest, forest investment program, technical consultation platform	Forest investment program, REDD+ consultation,	policies	Monitoring and evaluation
Republic of Congo	Workshops	Workshops	Policies	-
Cameroon	Workshops, certification, free prior and informed consent	Workshops, meetings, free prior and informed consent	Policies, Eco guards	inspectors
Liberia	Conveying informal gathering, public participation meetings	Workshops, training and capacity building	National Policies	Forest Development Authority (FDA) forest guards

Countries	Mechanism for stakeholder consultation	Mechanism for stakeholder participation	Mechanism for stakeholder implementation	Mechanism for stakeholder monitoring
Gambia	Consultation meetings, workshops	Validation meetings, written invitation	Sharing of reports during meetings, establishments of MoUs	Sharing of reports during meetings, monitoring and evaluation
Benin	Participatory approach, Consultative meetings	Participatory approach, Multisectoral consultations	Participatory approach, programs, and projects	Participatory approach, consultative approach

Respondents reported several limitations (Figure 8) encountered in properly integrating global initiatives into the forest sector initiatives. Limited technical capacity required in this process was highlighted as the key limitation (31%). 19% of respondent indicated that limited financial resources (19%) contributed a great deal in limiting the integration of global initiatives. Limited concrete information (14%) and low level of awareness were also considered as important limitations. To some respondents (7%), the poor implementation of existing legal frameworks limits the integration of global initiatives into national initiatives. Furthermore, 3% of respondents pointed out that the benefits from implementing forest-based initiatives such as REDD+ are not properly shared and finally, poor synergy in activities (2%) was also identified as a barrier in integrating global initiatives in national forest program

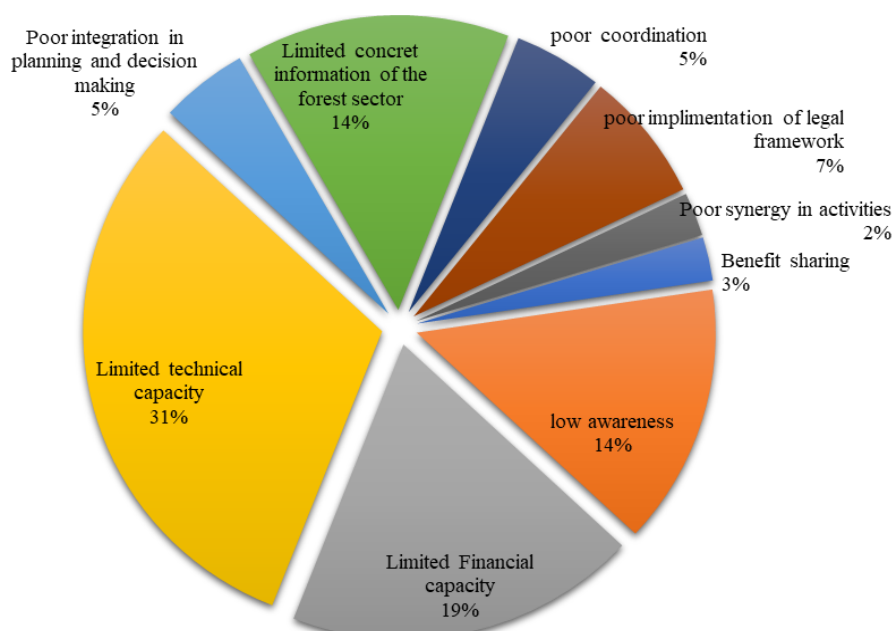


Figure 8: Limitations in integrating global initiatives into forest sector in West and Central Africa.

3.1.5. Capacity gaps on reporting forest-based plans and activities that relate to SDGs and NDCs at national, regional and international level.

20% of respondents in the DRC, 28.6% in Benin and 37.5% in Cameroon acknowledged that they understood what reporting Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and National Determined Contributions (NDCs) meant and have participated in reporting on forest action plans related to SDGs and NDCs. 37.5% of respondent also noted that there was a national plan for reporting forest and climate change-based initiatives. However, they stated there is need to strengthen implementation efforts. The existing channels for reporting forest based and climate change information is presented in Figure 9. Internet, the radio, local TV, and email were most frequently occurring channels that were used for reporting forest based and climate change information at national and international levels.

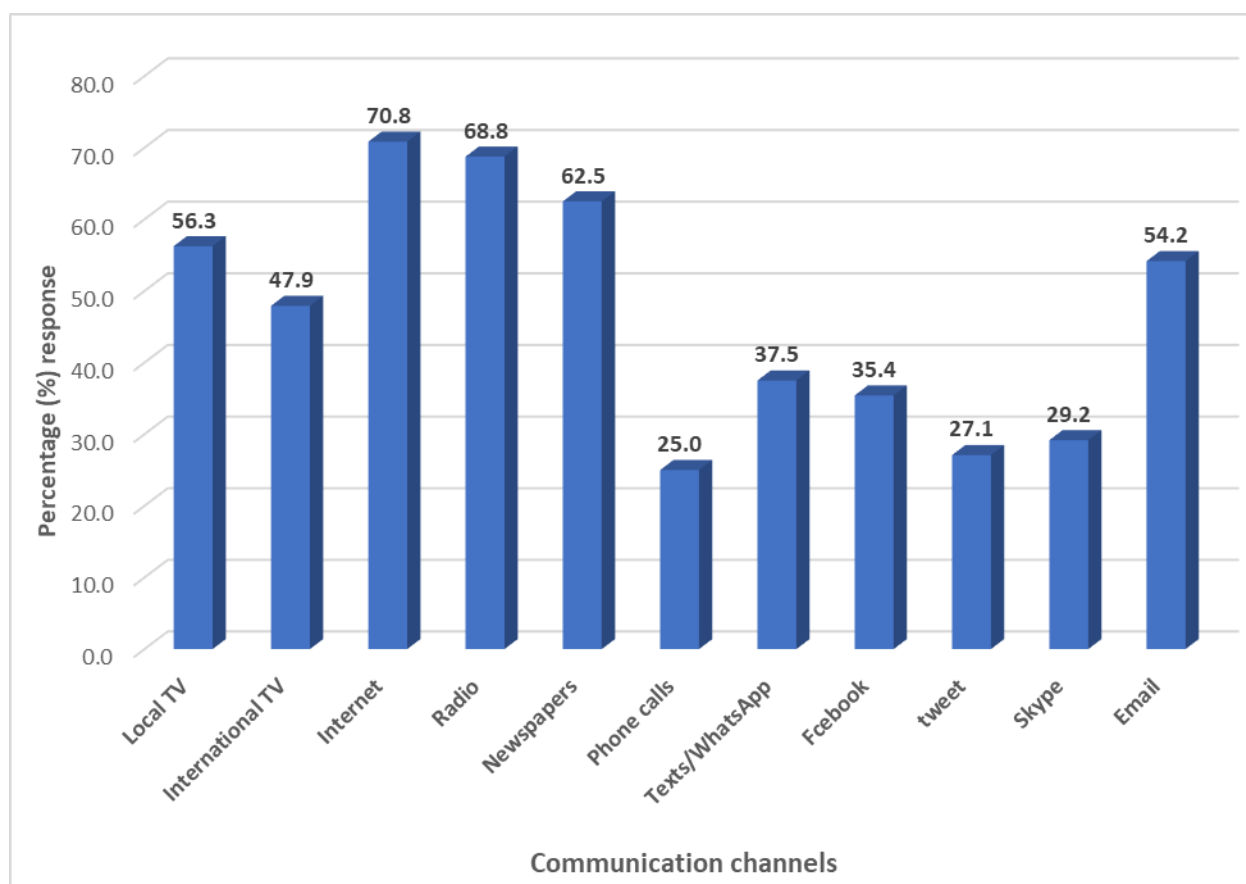


Figure 9: Channels for reporting forest based and climate change information at national and international level.

Respondents identified difficulties encountered in using the channels in reporting forest and climate change-based initiatives including:

- poor internet coverage especially for internet-based communication system such as: WhatsApp, email, Facebook, Tweeter, Skype.
- High operation cost for those who can afford smart phones to use for internet-based communications as well as local TV and radio stations.

- low energy or limited electricity especially in far removed from urban setting.
- weak implementation of policies.
- limited technical capacity in sustaining some of the communication platforms.
- poor periodic communication. This is related to inconsistency in communication which may be influence by some or all the listed difficulties.
- lack of adequate network, and limited TV sets.

In a similar vein, respondents also listed the following as factors that limit effective communication and dissemination of forest related initiatives related to SDG and NDC:

- weak implementation of policies.
- limited data availability.
- limited human and financial capacities. This is related to human capacity to collect the data required and the financial resources to this are not available.
- poor awareness on SDG.
- poor synergy among key stakeholders.

3.2 National Forest Sector Contributions to NDC

To reiterate the evolution of NDCs, at COP 19 in Warsaw, the parties to the UNFCCC agreed to adopt a new legal instrument in the 2015 UNFCCC session (COP 20). During COP 19, governments agreed to intensify or initiate preparations of their intended nationally determined contributions (INDC) to meet the ultimate objective of the convention to be submitted in March 2015 (Ecji, 2018 and CAN, 2017).

3.2.1. An assessment of the contribution of the forest sector to NDC of targeted countries.

This section sought to assess the contribution of the forest sector to NDC of targeted countries. Overlap and synergy in the national forestry sector and relevant global and regional climate change related policies and initiatives. An assessment of consideration of forest-based initiatives in NDCs of countries in the West and Central African Region revealed that 88.9% of countries in the Central African Region considered forest-based programs in their NDCs while some few countries (11%) did not include forest activities (*Figure 10*Figure 10). In the West African region, 64.3% of the countries indicated that they did not incorporate forest programs as part of their NDCs while, only 35.7% of the countries considered forest programs as part of their NDCs. Thus, countries in Central Africa consider the forest sector as an important sector to their response to the Paris Agreement.

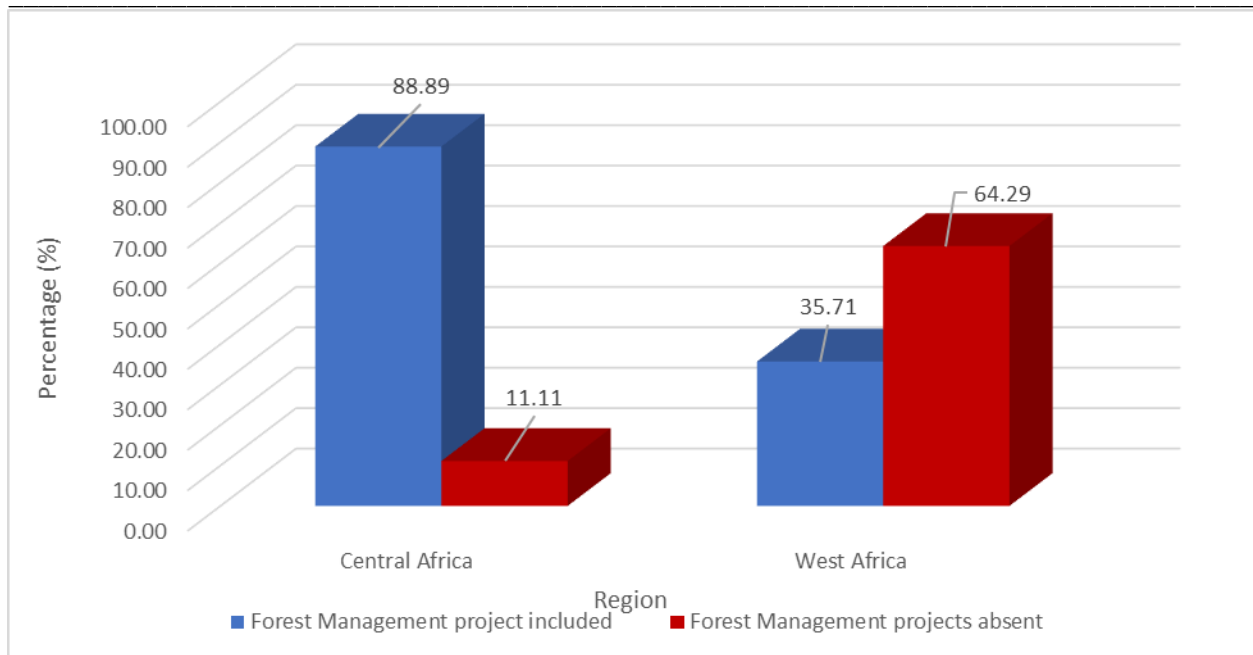


Figure 10: Consideration of forest project-based projects/programs in NDCs of Central and West African Countries

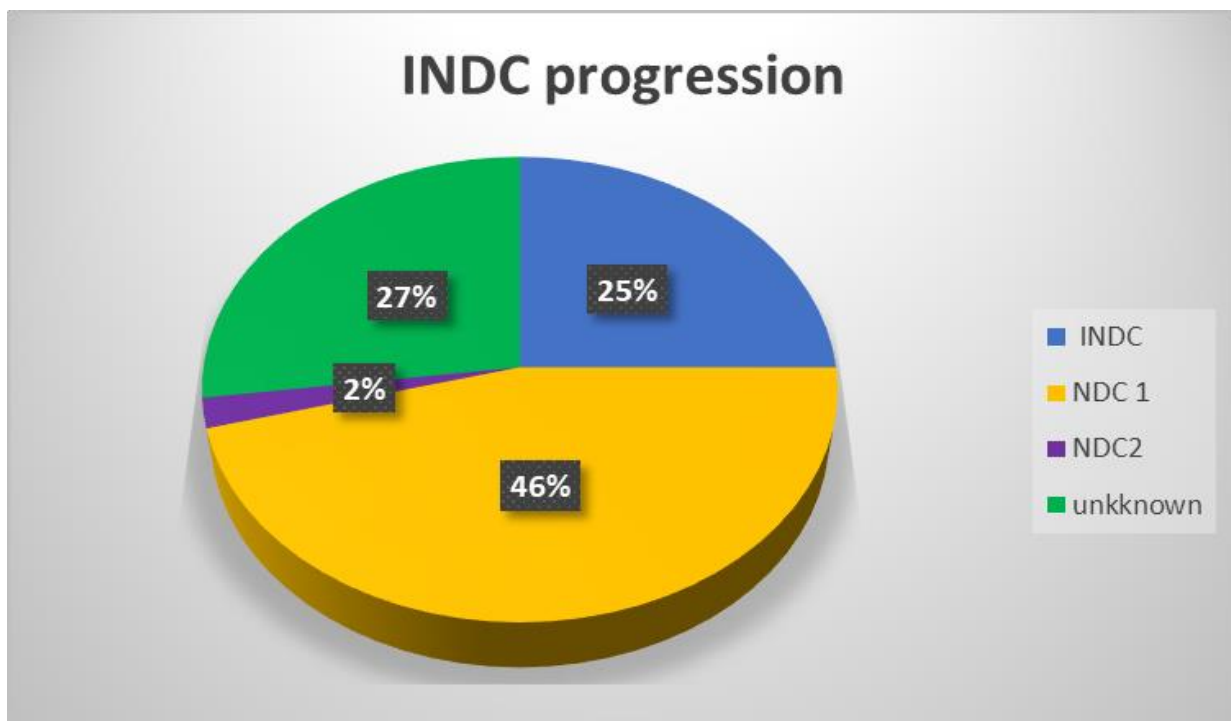


Figure 11: West and Central African counties evolution in NDC.

Field visits results revealed that 46% of the respondents opined that their countries have not yet evolved from NDC1. Respondents in Mali and Gambia were not sure if their countries have evolved from INDC while 25% supported the fact that their

countries are still at the INDC level (*Figure 11*). 27% of respondents were unaware of the subject matter while 2% reported that their countries have evolved to NDC1. A correlation of these responses to the UNFCCC NDC registry revealed that of all the countries in Central and West Africa, except for Senegal, which is still at the INDC level, have submitted the NDC1. None of these countries have progressed to NDC2 and the reported 2% in this study implies the low level of in-country awareness. On the readiness for implementation, 25% of respondents (in Cameroon, Gambia and Mali) confirmed the existence of an implementation plan while 45% indicated the lack of an NDC implementation plan. 40% of respondents had no idea.

An assessment was conducted on the NDCs evolutions for all the countries in West and Central Africa (**Error! Reference source not found.**). It was realized that, only Benin, Mali, Senegal and Rwanda have submitted their NDC1 while all the other countries were at the INDC level. However, some of these countries such as Cameroon are in the process of reviewing their NDC.

Table 4 NDC evolutions for countries in Central and West Africa

Country	INDC submitted	Submitted NDC 1
Benin	√	√
Burkina Fasso	√	
Cape Verde	√	
Gambia	√	
Ghana	√	
Guinea	√	
Guinea Bissau	√	
Ivory Coast	√	
Liberia	√	
Mali	√	√
Nigeria	√	
Senegal	√	√
Sierra Leone	√	
Togo	√	
Burundi	√	
Cameroon	√	
Central African Republic	√	
Chad	√	
Congo Brazzaville	√	
DRC	√	
Equatorial Guinea	√	
Rwanda	√	√
Sao Tome and Principe	√	
Gabon	√	

The understanding of global, regional and national processes leading to NDC was very low (17% of respondents). The process for NDC development as identified by the respondents included the following:

- Revision of existing programs/projects/initiatives,
- Sensitisation and technical meetings (kick-off workshop, consultation with stakeholders and technical meetings)
- Prioritizing and developing programs, projects and initiative,
- Drafting of INDC document,
- National validation of the INDC,
- Transformation of INDC to NDC in the context of the Paris Agreement.

Gambia expressed strong need for assistance in developing the INDC. Respondents stated that the country has received financial and technical support from the German government development Agency (GIZ) and the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN).

Generally, apart from Mali, respondents stated that the government leads the process of NDC development and review of NDCs in collaboration with other national structures and sector. Table 5 illustrates the lead public institution for the development and implementation of NDC. This process also involved the following stakeholder sectors: CSO, NGO (national and international), Research institutions, private sector and funding organizations.

Table 5: Lead structures for the process of developing and reviewing NDC.

Countries	Lead institutions
Democratic Republic of Congo	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development specifically Directorate of Sustainable Development (DDD)
Republic of Congo	Ministry of Tourism and the Environment and the Ministry of Forest economy.
Cameroon	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED)
Liberia	Forest Development Authority (FDA), Environment and Development Associated (EDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
Gambia	Department of Water Resources
Benin	Minister for the Living Environment and Sustainable Development (MCVDD)

Most of the sampled countries have made a lot of effort towards building capacity and awareness raising in the forest sector, some of which include training local stakeholder on the NDC process. These countries listed challenges encountered in building this capacity and awareness which included, poor government engagement, limited financial and technical capacity.

However, 25% of respondents listed efforts made towards enhancing capacity in the development of national forest sector contribution to NDC, while 27% identified some challenges faced, and 21% highlighted some opportunities for developing national forest sector contributions to NDC and this is depicted in Table 6.

Table 6: Efforts, challenges and opportunities for developing national forest sector contribution to NDC.

Country	Efforts made	Challenges encountered	Opportunities
Democratic Republic of Congo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resource mobilization. - Capacity building of different expert taking part in the NDC process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The forest policy does not take into consideration the objectives of the NDC. - The need to update the forest law and integrate artisanal forest sector. - Limited financial capacity - Weak implication of local actors and limited awareness of NDC. - Low coherence of the subject at national level. - Limited expertise on NDC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New forest policy will take into consideration the NDC objective and other missing links with other nation policy instruments. - If things are well organized, it can help restore degraded landscapes in the nation and Improve forest control and monitoring
Republic of Congo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A system put in place to enhance the respect for forest legalities. - Observation and implementation of EFIR and AMIR. - and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited financing of the national REDD+ investment strategy. - Limited capacity for resource mobilization. - Low technical capacity for the Implementation of the REDD+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Efforts will lead to fight against poverty. - Synergizing actions will create a good environment for private sector to do business sustainably
Cameroon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support capacity building to for journalist to enhance climate change communication. - Mobilized resources for the implementation of for NDC forest related activities such as the 5 REDD+ pilot projects, the Emission Reduction program etc. - Cameroon already ratified related international framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited expertise and limited data collection technical tools. - Low political will. - Limited data on national inventory base on all the exploitation surface area. - No activity data of soil. - Limited technical capacity of state personnel. - Poor coordination in the forest sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of forest (11%) of Congo Basin. - Available human resources. - An opportunity for bilateral and multilateral cooperation. - Improvement of government revenue for forest sector. - Can help enhance sustainability of the Agriculture sector

Enhancement of African national forest governance to respond to the Paris Agreement and related global change policies and initiatives

Country	Efforts made	Challenges encountered	Opportunities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited technical and financial resources. 	<p>and sustainable management of natural resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An opportunity to mobilize resources through the Green Climate Fund (GCF) window
Liberia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness raising initiatives on the impacts of climate change, capacity building implemented. - Mobilized strong government engagement for climate action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited national technical capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -
Gambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many efforts have been done by Forestry Department to improve the human, financial and physical capacities to its contribution to NDCs; Examples: many staff were trained to execute the forestry extension services, local communities were sensitized on participatory forest management technologies and Forest stations were improved through investing of National Forestry Fund. 	Insufficient data	An opportunity to enable development of a comprehensive adaptation investment plan.
Benin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity building of actors in elaborating projects integrating the conservation of biological resources and climate change methodologies. - Valorization of traditional knowledge managing the relationship of climate and related climate and biological resources - Estimation of the financial need at \$10,83 billion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobilization for financial resources - Operationalization of the institutional framework - Monitoring and evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possibility to mobilize finances through the different existing climate funds related to the Paris Agreement.

The results also revealed that there is a wide understanding of REDD+ among stakeholders in the case study countries. Except for Gambia and Mali, all the case study countries had National REDD+ Strategy. It was also noted that the countries with National REDD+ strategies have integrated the strategy into their NDCs. Additionally, in countries with a National REDD+ Strategy, ongoing and implemented REDD+ initiatives and Emission Reduction programs constituted their national NDC based REDD+ initiatives. As depicted in Table 7, most of these initiatives were afforestation initiatives, biomass energy, agroforestry programs, forest conservation and protection to reduce deforestation and forest degradation. The contribution of these initiatives to NDC are enormous, most of which focused on enhancing the inclusiveness of stakeholder involvement in the forest sector, enhancing carbon stock accumulation and reduction of GHG emissions and capacity building (Table 7).

Table 7: REDD+ initiatives with potential contribution to NDC

Countries	NDC based REDD+ initiatives or projects	Contribution of forest-based REDD+ initiatives to NDC
Democratic Republic of Congo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - REDD+ Strategy, - PiREDD, Forest Investment Program (FIP), - Jurisdictional REDD+, - DRC National REDD+ Fund (FONAREDD) - REDD+ investment plan with finance from CBFP - Integrated REDD+ Project in The Mbuji- Mayi/Kananga and Kisangani Basins. - The Mayi-Ndombe REDD+ project. - The Forest Investment Program (FIP) project in Congo Central - The Sangali Quali Emission Reduction project, - Reforestation and afforestation program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce deforestation and contribution to carbon stock increase. - Identify agriculture related deforestation and propose alternative measures. - REDD+ Emission Reduction (ER) programs contributes to the forest component of the NDC. - Harmonize REDD+ strategy and forest component of NDC. - Activities to conserve and improve carbon stocks and sequestration through forest management activities. - The practice of agroforestry improves the living conditions of the population in terms of food. - The reconstitution of forest capital through afforestation or reforestation makes it possible to maintain the biological diversity necessary for the maintenance of life.
Republic of Congo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emission Reduction-Program of Sangha Likouala (programme de réduction des émissions du grand Nord Congo) - Projet d'élaboration du plan national d'affectation des terres - The project for the cultivation of Cocoa and palm in the savanna 	In reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation through EFIR and EMIR practices

Countries	NDC based REDD+ initiatives or projects	Contribution of forest-based REDD+ initiatives to NDC
Cameroon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - REDD+ Pilot projects in the 5 Agro ecological zones and Emission Reduction programs. - The Roadmap to Deforestation Free cocoa in Cameroon initiative - GEF Project in Ngoyla Mintom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It helps in the sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation, respect for indigenous people's rights. - Application of the REDD+ will contribute to the first section of the NDC. - Create revenue for local communities which contributes to NDC. - Readiness process: the capacity of actors which continue to strengthen the NDC, enhance deforestation and Emissions. - application of REDD+ processes to gives the forest sector substantial contribution to NDC
Liberia	-Agroforestry programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By enhancing the work of Forest Development Authority (FDA) through capacity building of each department involved directly with the forest sector growth and development - By providing forest-dependent communities with alternative sustainable livelihood - It will encourage greater participation of local communities in forest protection and management
Benin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intensive reforestation programme of classified forests and reforestation areas through a policy of incentives for the best planters. - Support Program to support the Management of council Forests. - Promotion of sustainable biomass electricity production in Benin - Non-functional REDD+. - The integrated management of protected forest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of mechanisms to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. - Sustainable forest management. - Strengthening carbon stocks. - Non-functional REDD+.

Integrating forest-based initiatives and activities in NDCs is an aspect that requires reinforcement in Central and West Africa as it was difficult for respondents to identify principal forest-based projects with the potential to contribute to the NDC. That said, in the DRC, three projects were identified: supply of timber to the Mbuji-Mayi and Kisangani basins; the Mai-Ndombe jurisdictional REDD+ project of DRC and the Forest Investment Program (FIP) project in Central Congo while in Cameroon the GEF Project in Ngoyla Mintom had NDC potential. In Benin the project of the integrated management of the protected forest was identified as the project with potentials to contribute to the

NDC. In Gambia the project of Land Use Land Use-Change and Forestry (LULUCF) emissions category has potentials but unfortunately was not considered in the INDC.

Out of the total population of respondents sampled, 21% identified challenges in integrating forest initiatives into NDC. Some of them as depicted in Table 8 included the following: maintaining robust efforts in reforestation, poor communication and government engagement, limited technical and financial capacity. Some opportunities perceived included inter alia ratification of the Paris Agreement gives an opportunity for the countries to benefit from climate funding windows including GCF, GEF, climate fund etc, sustainable management of forest and natural resources and the creation of green investment (Table 8). 25% of the respondents proposed options for mitigation which were generally focused on:

- Mobilize technical and financial partners.
- Mobilize government to put in place a sustainable credit and finance mechanism for the implementation of NDC.
- Stakeholder sensitization and consultation.
- Seek synergy across stakeholder sectors and actions.

Table 8: Challenges, opportunities and proposed mitigative measures for integrating forest-based adaptation and mitigation activities and initiatives in NDCs.

	Perceived challenges	Perceived opportunities	Proposal for improvement
Democratic Republic of Congo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the carbon stock and maintain the rate of reforestation efforts. - Blockage of Central African Initiative (CAFI) project and the need to unblock (resulting from illegal forest concessions by Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MEDD) - low political will - Lack of information and poor communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of fund and projects as well as partners to enhance green investments. - Protection of the peatlands. - Creation of green employment to reduce pressure on forest. - The existence of structures. - The country is currently elaboration the launching of the implementation of the NDC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create good coordination with existing relevant forest related project. - Capacity building. - Finance to implement the REDD+ investment plan. - Institutional capacity building - Mobilize the government to set up a line of credit for the implementation of NDC. - Mobilize technical and financial partners
Republic of Congo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited financial resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fight against poverty. Possibility for creation of employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Put in place a sustainable finance mechanism
Cameroon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Illegal logging, - Limited technical expertise and lack of synergy among stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ratification of Paris agreement which open them to climate funding mechanisms. - Creation of specific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity building, - resource mobilization - Availability of GHG data. - Capacity building and

	Perceived challenges	Perceived opportunities	Proposal for improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High level of corruption in the forest sector. - The need for capacity building and poor coordination between ministries - Strong engagement. - Limited resource (human and financial) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - services for climate change. - Sustainable management of forest will provide funds for integration of NDC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consultation.
Liberia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low government engagement and inadequate technical personnel. - limited financial resources 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical capacity building
Gambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited financial resources and Limited low understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff capacity will be improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Embark on capacity building. - Organize series of sensitization meetings,
Benin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significant reduction in the rate of degradation of natural resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction of GHG emissions - Access to carbon funds, etc. - Opportunities to mobilize significant funding from climate windows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain and include all stakeholders. - Seeking synergy of actions through projects and programs

Some respondents (21%) also identified opportunities in the development and implementation of forest based NDC in their countries including:

- DRC contributes 60% of the Congo Basin Forest, thus, a potential area of interest for green investment.
- The DRC has already prepared the necessary set of tools for REDD+ implementation, such as the REDD+ strategy, Forest Emissions Reference Level, National Forest Monitoring Systems, in addition to several reforms, such as land use and land management, and the existence of an enabling institutional framework and mechanism for consulting forest sector stakeholders.
- Implementing forest based NDCs contribute to enhancing forest governance across Central and West Africa as well as increase in forest carbon stock.
- Coherence can easily be established between the NDC and other national initiatives.

3.2.2. The level of integration of forest-based climate change adaptation and mitigation and the Representation of LULUCF in NDCs

The NDCs of West and Central African countries were assessed to check if forest-based climate change and Land Use Land Use Change and Forestry initiatives were integrated as showed in Table 9 (details are found in Annex 3). From this assessment, it was noted that all the countries took into consideration forest related climate change adaptation in their NDCs. Also, as indicated in Table 9, apart from Liberia, DRC and Rwanda, these countries also mentioned the forest sector in their climate change mitigation priority actions. Furthermore, these countries were assessed for their integration of LULUCF initiatives in their NDCs and it was noticed that most of them apart from The Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Republic of Congo and Equatorial Guinea, had included LULUCF initiatives as a contribution to implementing the PA through the NDC. Lastly, REDD+ as a forest-based initiative was mentioned in the NDCs of 6 countries as indicated in Table 9.

Table 9: The integration of forest related initiatives in NDCs of Central and West African countries.

Country	Forest related adaptation	Forest related mitigation	LULUCF	REDD+
Benin	√	√	√	
Burkina Fasso	√	√	√	
Cape Verde	√	√	√	
Gambia	√	√		
Ghana	√	√	√	√
Guinea	√	√		
Guinea Bissau	√	√	√	√
Ivory Coast	√	√	√	√
Liberia	√			
Mali	√	√	√	
Nigeria	√	√		
Senegal	√	√	√	
Sierra Leone	√	√		√
Togo	√	√	√	
Burundi	√	√	√	
Cameroon	√	√	√	√
Central African Republic	√	√	√	
Chad	√	√	√	√
Congo Brazzaville	√	√		
DRC	√		√	
Equatorial Guinea	√	√		
Rwanda	√	√	√	
Sao Tome and Principe	√		√	
Gabon	√	√	√	

4. DISCUSSION

Globally, approximately 17.4% of Green House Gases (GHGs) are emitted by the forest sector, principally through deforestation and forest degradation (Bruce et al., 2018). According to FAO (2016), the rate of forest cover losses is increasing both in Central and West Africa. In Central Africa, 80% of tree cover losses are attributable to the DRC while in West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire is the most affected by deforestation.

4.1 Response to PA and related global climate change policies and initiatives

4.1.1 Forest governance

Even though there exist clear forest laws in some of the study countries, according to Cronkleton et al, (2008), implementation seem to be weak. This study attempted to assess the status of forest governance in selected case study countries in West and Central Africa to help forest stakeholders respond to PA and related global climate change policies and initiatives; as well as assess national forest sector contribution to NDCs in these countries. Governance incorporates the rules adopted to organize and manage activities to serve larger social objectives and solve conflicts between stakeholder groups, the functioning of institutions and their acceptance by the public, and the broader efficacy of government (Laird et al, 2010).

The study found that forest governance in general was partly good in these countries. Specifically, it was observed that there was some clarity and coherence in policy, legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks. Additionally, it was revealed that there was some transparency, accountability and inclusiveness regarding forest policy implementation. The issue might occur at operational decision-making levels where there is inadequate coordination. Freudenthal et al. (2011) illustrated this by pointing out that there is inadequate coordination across the relevant government institutions in Central Africa.

4.1.2 Forestry initiatives and climate change related policies

The study revealed that the most common barriers to effective implementation of forestry initiatives and climate change related policies included among others the lack of technical capacity, lack of logistical capacity, lack of financial capacity, lack of political will, weak enforcement, lack of trained personnel, ineffective coordination within the natural resource sector, inadequate capacity in the private and public sector. This is because most institutions and organizations in West and Central Africa are not equipped with adequate as well as proper technical and human resources for the implementation of forestry initiatives (Minang et al. 2008; Dkamela, 2010).

4.2 Knowledge gaps and skills in mainstreaming of global and regional CC policies and initiatives and their coordination

The study showed that the knowledge and skills on mainstreaming global and regional climate change policies and initiatives into national forestry policies in Central and West Africa was good and some examples of these initiatives were provided. That said, limited understanding and limited financial means were the main challenges in mainstreaming regional and global frameworks into national policies and local program. As Angelsen et al. (2009) further explain, only three out of 99 tropical developing countries have very good resources for mainstreaming REDD+ into national policy. It was observed that the key limitations of forest stakeholders to properly integrate global initiatives into the forest sector initiatives included the following: the issue of benefit sharing; lack of awareness and financial resources; limited technical capacity, lack of integration during planning and decision- making; non- mastery of relevant issues, lack of concrete information on the forestry sector; lack of political will, limited empowerment, and lack of synergistic actions.

This is reflected in the extremely long period it takes to properly integrate initiatives like REDD+ into the forest sector initiatives (Alemagi et al. 2014). Difficulties encountered in using the media in reporting forest and climate change-based initiatives including poor internet connection, inadequate revenue, low energy or limited electricity, weak political will, limited capacity, poor periodic communication, high operation cost, technical issues, lack of adequate network, and limited TV sets. Similarly, factors that limit effective communication and dissemination of forest related initiatives related to SDG and NDC included lack of political will, lack of finance for actual field data collection, lack of data, poor awareness of SDG, limited capacity, weak internet, lack of synergy among key stakeholders, unavailability of clear and precise data, limited human and financial capacities.

4.3 National Forest Sector Contributions to NDC

It was revealed that most of the sampled countries have made lots of efforts towards building capacity and awareness raising in the forest sector, some of which include training local stakeholder on the NDC process. However, these countries listed several challenges encountered in building this capacity and awareness including, poor political will, limited financial and technical capacity. Indeed, several recent studies have corroborated these results (see, for example, Shijo et al. 2013).

REDD+ is a voluntary climate change mitigation approach that was developed by Parties to the UNFCCC. It aims to incentivize developing countries to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conserve forest carbon stocks, sustainably manage forests and enhance forest carbon stock. The study also showed that there was a wide understanding of REDD+ in the case study countries and there exist a

National REDD+ Strategy for these countries except for Gambia and Mali. Thus, efforts should be made in these two countries to advance REDD+ like the development of the REDD+ readiness preparation proposal (R-PP). However, the study revealed that out of all the countries in West and Central Africa, REDD+ was mentioned only in the NDCs of 8 of them (Table 9)

NDCs principally are voluntary commitments made by the UNFCCC Paris Agreement member states with the goal of fighting against climate change which must lead to the reduction of 45% of the Green House Gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 with reference to the 2020 level (Sonwa et al., 2018). The IPCC 2018 report reviewed the commitments made by countries and announced that the existing ones were insufficient to contain warming below the 2°C target. In the Paris Agreement, Article 5 is dedicated to the forest, which is a clear message that forest plays a very important role in achieving the global goal. This might have not been very successful in West and Central Africa as a result of the challenges identified in this study which included among others, maintaining robust efforts in reforestations, poor communication and political will, as well as limited technical and financial capacity. According to the African Development Bank (2018), limited technical and financial capacity are some of the challenges faced by countries in Africa in as much as integrating forest initiatives into NDC is concerned. Again, it is highlighted in the report of African Development Bank (2019) that the challenges associated with accessibility of climate finance and how climate finance is defined, will exacerbate if rigor in terms of costing, methodology, financing options and the implementation of national sustainable development is not captured in NDC of African countries. According to PROFOR (2011) in West Africa (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone), tree and land tenure regimes is one of the policy failures that needs to be urgently addressed to revive the forest sector. They further recommended that the local forest governance need to be reformed to enhance effectiveness in institutional synergy. Again, policy makers and other stakeholders throughout the sub-region are aware of past failures and current problems, but are divided on the solutions (PROFOR, 2021).

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study assessed forest governance in selected case study countries in West and Central Africa to help forest stakeholders respond to Paris Agreement and related global climate change policies and initiatives; as well as assess national forest sector contribution to NDCs in these countries. The study found that while forest governance in general was partly good in these countries the issue might occur at operational decision-making levels where there is inadequate coordination.

The study also revealed the most common barriers to effective implementation of forestry initiatives and climate change related policies are the lack of technical capacity, logistical capacity, financial capacity, political will, trained personnel, and weak enforcement, ineffective coordination within the natural resource sector and inadequate capacity in the private and public sector. The study also identified the challenges of

mainstreaming regional and global frameworks into national policies and local program as well as limitations of forest stakeholders to properly integrate global initiatives into the forest sector initiatives.

Difficulties encounter in using the media in reporting forest and climate change-based initiatives were also obtained from the study. Similarly, factors that limit effective communication and dissemination of forest related initiatives related to SDG and NDC were identified including political will, financing, capacity, and awareness, among others. In addition, it was found that most of the sampled countries have made effort towards building capacity and awareness raising in the forest sector, some of which include training local stakeholder on the NDC process. However, these countries listed several challenges encountered in building this capacity and awareness. The study further showed that there was a wide understanding of REDD+ in the case study countries and there exist a National REDD+ Strategy for these countries except for Gambia and Mali.

Lastly, the results revealed challenges in integrating forest initiatives into NDC. Thus, very specific recommendations for overcoming challenges identified in this study include among others proper knowledge transfer, investment in human and financial resources, proper capacity building, education and sensitization, the need for political will, the need for REDD+ Readiness in Gambia and Mali, and synergistic actions within relevant government institutions.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1 : Data collection tool (Questionnaire). Attached separately.

Annex 2 : Institution interviewed.

Country	Institutions/experts
DRC	AGEDUFOR
	DG Foret
	European Union DRC
	Coord. Peatland. MEDD
	CCV. Celule de Controle et Verification
	MEDD, Dir. Inventaire et Amenagement Forestiere
	Mechanism de development Propre FVC- MEDD
	DDD
	Fédération des Industriels du Bois en RDC
RoC	US Forest Service (USFS)
	MIN. Tourism and the Environment
CMR	MINFOF
	WWF
	GIZ-ProPFE
	REDD+ ST
	PNDP
	INBAR
	MINEPDED (NDC focal point)
	Proforest
Liberia	<i>Liberia's Forestry Development Authority (FDA)</i>
Gambia	National Environment Agency
	Forestry Department
	All Gambia Forestry Platform
	National Environment Agency
	Department of Parks and Wildlife
	Natural Resources Consulting (NACO)
	National Farmer Platform of Gambia
Mali	Ministry de l'Environnement
	National Directorate of Water and Forestry (DWF)
	<i>Expert in Agroforestry</i>
	Expert in protection of forest ecosystems
Benin	Office National du Bois
	Direction Générale des Eaux, Forêts et Chasse/ Inspection Forestière des collines
	Direction Générale des Eaux, Forêts et Chasse
	Université d'Abomey-Calavi/Laboratoire de Biomathématiques et d'Estimations Forestières
	Laboratoire de Cartographie (LaCarto) Université d'Abomey-Calavi
	Laboratoire de Physique du Rayonnement, Université d'Abomey Calavi
	Hinson
	National office of Wood
	Direction Générale des Eaux, Forêts et Chasse/ Inspection Forestière des collines

Annex 3: NDC analysis for West and Central African Countries

Country	Forest relate adaptation	Forest related mitigation	LULUCF	REDD+
Benin	Promoting intensive afforestation throughout the country using incentive measures; promoting sustainable management of public and community forests areas; adapting forest sector's legislative and regulatory framework to climate change context; updating the national forest inventory. By 2020, Reducing communities' vulnerability to degradation of forest ecosystems; promoting agroforestry systems; developing mangrove ecosystems (distinctive forestlands of the coastline) by 2030	Development and rational management of forest resources: raising the forest cover rate to 20% by 2025	Increasing the capacity of carbon sequestration of the country's forest ecosystems through the implementation of sustainable natural forests development and the strengthening of efforts of reforestation/plantation	
Burkina Fasso	Implementation of good forestry and agroforestry practices (selective cutting of fuelwood, assisted natural regeneration, clearing controlled, etc.); Natural protection of river banks and water bodies; Agroforestry practices for sustainable natural resource management; Community and Participatory forest, wildlife and fish resources Management	Afforestation Reforestation Project equivalent to 3 Forest Investment Programme (FIP);	200 Rural Communes develop and implement, with the support of the State or NGOs, the following ANR projects with the participation of at least 5 village communities each; The management plans of X classified forests are audited and updated with the aim of diversifying management objectives and increasing the responsibility of local communities; 12 Regions (TC) or 180 municipality, in relation to the grassroots communities, create and each classify 1 biological diversity conservation area for municipal or regional use with a minimum area of 5,000	

Enhancement of African national forest governance to respond to the Paris Agreement and related global change policies and initiatives

			hectares; 2000 ha (i.e. 200 km) of river banks are rehabilitated and defended every year.	
Cape Verde	Protecting and preventing degradation of coastal zones and their habitat	Afforestation and reforestation; Forest governance, strategies and capacity building		
Gambia		Afforestation: Plant trees on communal lands to increase forest coverage	Afforestation: Plant trees on communal lands to increase forest coverage	
Ghana	Agriculture resilience building in climate vulnerable landscapes	Promote Sustainable utilization of forest resources through REDD+	Promote Sustainable utilization of forest resources through REDD+	Promote Sustainable utilization of forest resources through REDD+
Guinea	Update the Mangrove Management and Development Plan (SDAM) ; Reduce the sources of mangrove degradation; Include adaptation in local development plans and spatial planning tools; Enhance scientific knowledge of the coast as a whole	Run reafforestation programmes throughout the country, covering 10,000 ha per year, and ensure sustainable management of replanted areas; Ensure effective conservation of classified forests and protected areas		
Guinea Bissau	Mainstreaming climate actions into broader policy frameworks including forest and biodiversity conservation	Reforestation. New forest policy -Establish and implement a new forestry policy including through conservation and restoration of forests and ensure good forest governance	0	Strengthen the existing capacity to participate in the REDD+ mechanism and consequently raise the national effort to combat the adverse impacts of climate change

Ivory Coast	Fight against deforestation and forest degradation of land cover	Coherence of national planning and rural development to develop agriculture and the forestry sector; Agricultural development without extension onto remaining forest and low GHG emission; improving of sustainable forest management and forest governance	Drafting and implementation of development plans and participatory management of classified forests; Fight against deforestation and forest degradation of land cover	REDD+: Making National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIPs) consistent with strategies to limit deforestation (REDD+ process) through a master plan for land-use planning to 2030 (land tenure security) in consultation with each agricultural sector and the territories.
Liberia	Increase awareness and strengthen participation of local dwellers in forest conservation; Protection of forest and biodiversity rich forest zones; Increase the amount of forested land through reforestation of degraded lands; Develop and implement Coastal Zone policy, strategy and management plan; Construct hard structures such as sea walls or revetment; Manage and conserve coastal mangrove ecosystem; Facilitate technology transfer and training of institutional and local experts in coastal zone management and monitoring.		strategy and management plan; Manage and conserve coastal mangrove ecosystem	
Mali		Global Climate Change Alliance project; Forest management decentralisation programme; Niger Delta sustainable development program; Project on	Classified forest management plan	

		extension and the reinforcement of protected area systems		
Nigeria	Strengthen the implementation of the national Community-Based Forest Resource Management Programme; Review forest policy; frequent forest inventory; Improve management of forest reserves and enforce low impact logging practice; Provide extension services to CSOs, communities and the private sector to help establish and restore community and private natural forests, plantations and nurseries.	climate smart agriculture: halting deforestation and forest degradation; agroforestry; Stopping the use of charcoal		
Senegal	Protection and development of areas to be risks and ecosystem restoration degraded coastlines; reinforcement of ecosystem resilience; Implementation of a national master plan on land use	Increase annually the reforested/restored areas by about 1297 ha of mangrove and 21,000 ha of various plantations; Reduce the areas burnt due to late fires by 5% and those due to controlled fires by 10% with respect to 2015.		
Sierra Leone	Adoption and application of climate-smart and conservation agriculture through best agricultural practices that enhance soil fertility and improve crop yield; integration of climate change adaptation in land reforms	Restoration of degraded lands with high production potential		Explore the Carbon Trading and Payment system of REDD and REDD+ initiatives
Togo	Land use map study on areas with a strong potential for the development of biofuels in conjunction with food security issues	Promote reforestation through creation of plantations and agroforestry, sustainable forest planning and protection	the promotion of private, community and State reforestation through the creation of plantations and the promotion of agroforestry on cultivated land; sustainable	

			forest planning and protection	
Burundi	Rehabilitation of degraded areas; protection of buffer zones in Lake Tanganyika floodplain and around the lakes of Bugesera.	Development and rational management of forest resources: raising the forest cover rate to 20% by 2025. Building Human and institutional capacity		
Cameroon	Reducing the vulnerability of forests to climate change in Cameroon.	Strengthen the sustainable management and enhancement of forests and biodiversity, thanks to the spatial monitoring of land and Promoting the rehabilitation of degraded land and the reforestation of savannah areas and enhancing carbon sinks in degraded forests.	Consistent planning and the development of rural areas for develop agriculture while limiting the deforestation / degradation	Ensuring coherence between agricultural development plans and strategies limitation of deforestation or degradation (REDD+ process) thanks to the National plan for the planning and sustainable development of the territory (planned for 2017) in consultation with each of the sectors and the territories;
Central African Republic	Improve knowledge about resilience to climate change; Sustainable management of the agricultural, forestry and animal husbandry systems; Land-use planning	National programme for advanced conversion of wood; National programme for reforestation and rehabilitation forest-exploitation areas	Sustainable management of the agricultural, forestry and animal	

Chad	Sustainable management of the agricultural, forestry and animal husbandry systems; Land-use planning and agroforestry	Programme of environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources; CHAD REDD R-PP Project; Great Green Wall project; national programme for the development of green belts surrounding large urban cities	husbandry systems; Land-use planning; programme of environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources	CHAD REDD R-PP Project;
Congo Brazzaville	The protection of the natural heritage, biodiversity, forests and fisheries resources, at through an adaptation approach rooted in the protection of ecosystems	Forest management activities, reforestation, and forest conservation		
DRC	Management of national forest resources and the protection and conservation of vulnerable coastal ecosystems			
Equatorial Guinea	Implementation of National Adaptation plan	Implementation of National and Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) to accompany the REDD+ strategy company the REDD+ strategy; Implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan on Biodiversity Conservation (ENPAD) Biological Diversity (ENPADIB) and strengthen the National System of Protected Areas (SNAP) with the incorporation by joining UNESCO's Biosphere Reserve		

		Programme		
Rwanda	Development of Agroforestry and Sustainable Agriculture; improve forest management for degraded forest resources; Promote agroforestry/reforestation in degraded forest areas; improve approach for planning and monitoring for sustainable land management		Develop sustainable land management practices (soil erosion control; landscape management)	
Sao Tome and Principe	Strengthening the National Service of Civil Protection; Promote forestry / planting of species resistant to dry and low rainfall by 2030 and Fire, by 2025, Develop a national program for sustainable management of the forest and agro-forestry ecosystems by 2025		Strengthening the National Service of Civil Protection and Fire, by 2025, Develop a national program for sustainable management of the forest and agro forestry ecosystems by 2025	
Gabon	the implementation of a scheme development of the coastal urban environment, the promotion of income-generating activities related to marine and coastal ecosystems; mechanism including projects for conservation of mangroves for coastal protection, species protection;	the adoption of a Forest Code that encourages foresters to extend their rotations from 15 years to 25 years, with lower damage rates; the creation of 13 national parks in 2002, which prohibits logging in vast areas of the country.		

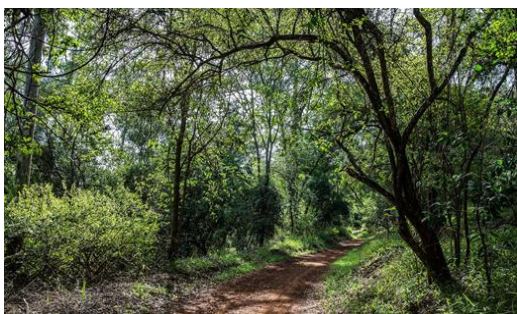
Annex 4: Forestry initiatives and other climate change arrangements in the selected case study countries

Countries	National initiatives	Regional initiatives	Global initiatives
Democratic Republic of Congo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The law on the fundamental principles of the environment. - Law No. 004/03 related to the conservation of nature. - Letter of intent with Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) - Direction of Sustainable Development, (DDD)-DPC-Green Climate Fund (GCF), at the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MEDD) - National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) - National publication on fight against Climate change, - Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) - Climate Change Action plan - Forestry code - National REDD+ Strategy - Law on Environmental Protection - Law on the conservation of nature - Law related to water - Law No 82 of May 20th on hunting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Brazzaville Treaty on the Conference of Ministers of Forestry of Central Africa (COMIFAC), - Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI)Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) convergence plan - AFR100 - African Convention on the conservation of nature and natural resources - Treaty on the conservation and sustainable management of forest ecosystems in Central Africa and establishing COMIFAC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biodiversity and Desertification Convention. - Desertification and biodiversity. - Ratification of the Paris Agreement, - Bonn Challenge. - International Accord on Tropical Wood, - United Nations Convention on Biodiversity - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol - Declarations of principles of the United Nations on Forest Ecosystems
Republic of Congo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - REDD+ initiatives - Forest investment document - Central African Forest Initiative. (CAFI). - Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), - Sangali Quata ER program - Submits NC1, NC2 and NC3. - Forest code and related laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - COMIFAC convergence plan. - AFR100 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paris Agreement. - International conventions related to forest like the biodiversity convention - CDD
Cameroon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1994 forest law, - 1995 forest policy - Degree No 94/531 - Vision 2020 of subsector of forest and fauna. - Nationally Determined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FAO Regional Code - COMIFAC - Convergence Plan - CAFI-National Investment strategy for Cameroon (revision in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CBA, - CITTES, - APV/FLEGT - UNFCCC - Paris Agreement.

Countries	National initiatives	Regional initiatives	Global initiatives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution (NDC), National Climate Change Observatory National climate change Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) PREREED 1996 Environmental law, National REDD+ Strategy. and ER-Program, Voluntary Partnership Agreement/ EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (VPA/FLEGT) Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) The 1999 agricultural policy The first National Communication to UNFCCC (NC1) 	progress)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ITTO, Bonn Challenge, AFRI100 REDD+ Kyoto protocol
Liberia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Forestry Reform Law of 2006, Guidelines for forest management planning in Liberia. Community Rights Law of 2009 with respect forest land and environmental protection. National Forestry Reform Law of 2006 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNFCCC Paris Agreement
Gambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA), Gambia Forest Management Concept (GFMC), Community Forestry Implementation Guidelines. Large scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation. National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). The Gambia Environmental Action Plan. The National Action Plan to Combat Desertification The National Action Plan on Forest and Wildlife Management. Forest Act 2018, Forest policy Agriculture and Natural 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Great Green Wall for Sahara and Sahel Initiative. Forest policy for ECOWAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> United Nations Convention on Biodiversity United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) UNFCCC Paris Agreement

Countries	National initiatives	Regional initiatives	Global initiatives
	<p>Resource (ANR) Policy (2017 – 2026) National Climate Change Policy,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Gambia</i> National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016 Environmental Impact Assessment Regulation, - Biodiversity Act, - Climate Change Priority Action Plan, - <i>Gambia</i> Environmental Action Plan 		
Mali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Policy for Resource Management (The new law governing management of forest resources (no. 95-004) replaced the forest code of 1986)¹⁰ - National climate change policy 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UNCCD - UNFCCC Paris Agreement
Benin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Law on the Environment - Government Action Program - Law 93-009 on Forest ecosystems - Law N°2002 on fauna - Strategic Plan of MCVDD (2018-2022). - The Action Programme of the Government (PAG) (2016 – 2021) - Benin Alafia 2025, - National Climate Change Adaptation Action Program (PANA), - Benin Constitution, - National Developmental Plans - Benin National Forest Policy - Benin Decree on Climate Change - National Adaptation Plan - National Development Plan (2018-2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - REDD+. - Inter State Permanent Committee to combat desertification (CILSS). - Common Policy on Environmental Amelioration of West African States - Agenda 2063 of the African Union. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - REDD+ convention, - Convention for the fight against deforestation (CDB). - UN Convention on Biodiversity - United Nations Convention on Biodiversity - United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) - UNFCCC Paris Agreement - New Agenda 2030 of the United Nations

¹⁰ <https://pubs.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/G00259.pdf>



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