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Altering the climate of poverty under climate change in Sub-Saharan Africa: Setting priorities and strategies for adaptation with the forests to climate change

Yaoundé Cameroon, 23-25 June 2008

Congo Basin Forests and Climate Change
Adaptation Kick-off meeting summary report

CIFOR

June 2008

Abstract

This report provides the summary of the kick-off meeting of the project « Congo Basin Forests and Climate Change Adaptation (CoFCCA)» in Central Africa. The meeting took place in Franco Hotel in Yaoundé, Cameroon from 23rd to 25th June 2008 and aimed at:

- Formally launch CoFCCA project in the Central Africa Region,
- Jointly undertake stakeholders' identification and prioritization of highly vulnerable forest goods and service sectors to climate change at both national and regional scales,
- Share views and experiences in response strategies to climate change impacts in the region especially on a shared trans-boundary resource-base like the Congo Basin Forests, and
- Initiate a regional policy dialogue on climate change adaptation

During this meeting some invited participants shared their national experiences and strategies on adaptation to climate change. And it was noted that all the three countries involved in the project have developed their first communication to the UNFCCC and that with the exception of Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic have already developed and adopted their National Action Plan for Adaptation (NAPA).

Modelling Congo Basin climate using the PRECIS Programme was recommended and that this exercise be based on the experience of TroFCCA and ACMAD in the West Africa. For that, there is need of

- Identifying and training a team that will be able to use the tool
- Initiating and strengthening a collaboration between CoFCCA and the National Meteorology Directions
- Creating a Regional Observatory of climate change in the Central African region that could be under COMIFC

Four (04) priority sectors that are vulnerable to climate change were jointly identified and prioritized for the Central Africa region. Those sectors on which should focus the research are: Food, water, energy and health.

Background

Congo Basin Forests and Climate Change Adaptation (CoFCCA) project in Central Africa is a three-year effort of the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) funded by the International Development Research Center (IDRC) under their Climate Change Adaptation Programme for Africa (CCAA). This project aims to contribute to national processes of adaptation to climate change through the development of policy-oriented adaptation strategies that also ensure sustainable use of forest resources in the Congo Basin Forests. The participating countries include Cameroon, Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo.

From 23rd to 25th June 2008, CIFOR organized a kick-off meeting of the CoFCCA project in Franco Hotel in Yaoundé, Cameroon. This meeting followed that of the Project Implementation Planning & Induction Workshop that also took place from 24 to 27 March 2008 in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Objectives

- To formally launch CoFCCA project in the Central Africa Region,
- To jointly undertake stakeholders' identification and prioritization of highly vulnerable forest goods and service sectors to climate change at both national and regional scales,
- To share views and experiences in response strategies to climate change impacts in the region especially on a shared trans-boundary resource-base like the Congo Basin Forests, and
- To initiate a regional policy dialogue on climate change adaptation

Meeting agenda

The meeting was officially opened by Mr Denis KOULAGNA, Secretary General of the Cameroon Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF), representing Mr. Elvis NGOLLE NGOLLE, Minister of Forests and Wildlife who could not attend the meeting. The launching was preceded by the welcome address by the representative of the CIFOR Regional Coordinator for Central Africa who also could not be available and the address of the representative of the Canadian Cooperation in Cameroon standing in for the IDRC, the main funding agency of the CoFCCA project.

Participants to this meeting included the representatives of the 3 Central Africa countries directly involved in the project: Cameroon, Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo. National delegations were made up of the representatives of the Ministries in charge of Forests, Environment as well as the National Directions of Meteorology of the three participating countries. Others who took part in this meeting included: the representative of the Network of Indigenous People in Central Africa; the representatives of some international, regional, intergovernmental organizations; some NGOs active in the region; as well as other parties interested in activities related to climate change in Africa.

During the meeting, various stakeholders, experts and policymakers including invited participants shared their national, regional and international experiences on adaptation to climate change. The meeting also explored opportunities for a regional framework on adaptation building on the regional policy platform (COMIFAC) for the management of the Congo Basin Forests. Other trans-boundary activities crucial for biodiversity conservation, natural resource flow and transhumance activities which are directly relevant for climate change adaptation in the region were also discussed.

The meeting was structured around eight (08) main sessions:

- (1) Introduction and opening of the workshop: this session consisted of participants self introduction and the opening addresses by the representatives of CIFOR Regional Coordinator for Central Africa, the Canadian Cooperation and the Cameroonian Minister of Forests and Wildlife, respectively.

- (2) Project presentation and climate change challenges in the region: this session provides an overview of the vulnerability of Central Africa region to climate change and its challenges on the development of the region. The project coordinator also elaborated on the importance of forests in the adaptation of climate change in the Central Africa region.
- (3) National response activities and country plans for climate change adaptation: this session was devoted to climate change and national intervention in the Central Africa region.
- (4) Forestry under new challenges (national responses in policies and activities): this session was about forest policy and the role of forests in the national development and poverty reduction in the project countries.
- (5) Consolidating regional activities for climate change response: this session was about the improvement of synergies in the Congo basin forests and the experience of some regional organizations on the potential of forests for adaptation.
- (6) Addressing the needs for regional modelling and downscaling- tools, data and collaboration with national meteorology: this session was devoted to climatic data and activities involving national directions of meteorology in the region and the development of a common approach for regional climate modeling and downscaling in Central Africa with implications for climate change adaptation. The experience of ACMAD (based in Niamey, Niger) in West Africa was considered particularly relevant in this regard.
- (7) Sharing experiences and perspectives of climate impacts on the forests and effects on activities: this session was about the perception of climate change according to indigenous/local communities, local NGOs and researchers.
- (8) Prioritization of forest-based sectors for vulnerability and adaptation: this last session was focused on the identification of priority sectors that are vulnerable to climate change and the prioritization of those sectors to regional level. In this session, participants worked in groups representing the three project countries and the results were then restituted and discussed in plenary.

Summary of the recommendations

For any adaptation strategy in the Central African region,

- Incorporate considerations related to climate change in the sectoral plans and development programmes, activities of sensitization and awareness of governments, as well as individuals and institutions
- Set up and improve forecast and early warning systems
- Take as a priority the development of national and regional strategies to climate change adaptation in order to cope with the increasing consequences of the impacts of climate change
- Explore additional funding opportunities as funding is the main barrier to research on adaptation in the region
- Recognize and take into consideration the traditional knowledge, customs, practices and skills of indigenous/local people in forest resource management for better conservation of the Congo basin forests.
- Promote and encourage participative management under the condition of prior, free, clear, and informed consent.
- Evaluate the dynamics of forest ecosystem fragmentation by studying the impacts of invading exotic species such as *Chromolaena odorata* and other bio-indicators of climate change

- Address the problem of forest tenure and review the structure of rights over those forests in order to ensure their role in the adaptation to climate change
- Reduce or halt the rate of deforestation and forest degradation in the tropic
- Ensure fair and equitable sharing of the benefits of conservation efforts and sustainable management of tropical forests (management, reforestation, stabilization of forests, etc.)
- Address the root causes of deforestation and forest degradation
- Develop and support research activities related to climate change
- Build the capacity of all stakeholders to tackle problems related to climate change
- Minimize or reduce the factors of vulnerability
- Reinforce and secure the collection, treatment and delivery of data and other meteorological, hydrologic and climatic information
- Seek ACMAD expertise for capacity building on climate change modelling in Central Africa considering its knowledge in the subject in West Africa

CONCLUSION

The kick off meeting of the Congo Basin and Climate Change Adaptation project in Central Africa reached its objectives. The regional priority sectors vulnerable to climate change selected for in-depth research were: food, water, energy and health. The full report of the meeting is available in French.

This kick off meeting was immediately followed by two days of internal consultation for the project task forces to discuss the progress of the project and the next steps in its implementation. The report of the task force meeting is available in French.