The Involvement of Women: A Challenge in the Sustainable Management of Kévazingo

L'implication des femmes: Un défi dans la gestion durable du Kévazingo

- Gender Analysis Report Follow-up on Recommendations Project: Capacity Building for Effective Involvement of Non-State Actors in the Preservation of Kévazingo. Activity 1.2: Conduct a gender study in communities for its integration into the monitoring of Kévazingo exploitation. Gender Analysis Report Follow-up on Recommendations October 2020 Woleu-Ntem and Ogooué-Ivindo

-- 1 of 34 --

TABLE OF CONTENTS List of Acronyms and Abbreviations .....Error! Bookmark not defined. Context .....Error! Bookmark not defined. General Objective of the Study .....Error! Bookmark not defined. Specific Objectives .....Error! Bookmark not defined. Methodology .....Error! Bookmark not defined. Chapter 1: Regulatory and Institutional Framework of Gender and Forest Management in Gabon .....Error! Bookmark not defined. Section I: Legal Framework ..... Error! Bookmark not defined. Section II: Institutional Framework ..... Error! Bookmark not defined. Chapter 2: Gender Analysis in the Context of the Project .....Error! Bookmark not defined. Section I: Analysis of Women's Involvement in Natural Resource ManagementError! Bookmark not defined. Section II: Gender Analysis in the Context of Kévazingo Management .. Error! Bookmark not defined. Chapter 3: Strategies for Better Involvement of Women in Independent Forest Observation and Sustainable Management of Kévazingo .....Error! Bookmark not defined. Section I: Women's Involvement in Forest Management ..... Error! Bookmark not defined. Section II: Some Recommendations ..... Error! Bookmark not defined. Annexes .....Error! Bookmark not defined.

-- 2 of 34 --

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations CITES:.....Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora DECEFI:.....Development of Community Alternatives to Illegal Logging FAO:.....Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations IFAD:.....International Fund for Agricultural Development OI:.....Independent Observation NGO:.....Non-Governmental Organization CSO:.....Civil Society Organizations SNEEG:.....National Gender Equality and Equity Strategy EU:.....European Union

-- 3 of 34 --

Context The integration of gender into any policy, program, or development project is underpinned by key legal instruments and guidelines from major international conferences on development in general and on women in particular. As part of the implementation of the project "Capacity Building for Effective Involvement of Non-State Actors in the Preservation of Kévazingo," which is part of the FAO-EU FLEGT Program, aimed at contributing to the sustainable management of Kévazingo through improving the legal framework for its exploitation and the effectiveness of the enforcement measures related to it. To achieve the assigned objective, the project requires effective involvement of non-state actors, particularly the involvement of women in Independent Observation (OI) of forests in general and sustainable management of Kévazingo in particular. The Gabonese government has established institutional mechanisms

allowing women equitable access to economic resources on par with men through the adoption of a National Gender Equality and Equity Strategy (SNEEG). In its content, the SNEEG highlights the low productivity of women, resulting in low economic power. This low productivity translates into low participation of women in forestry activities. The option of a gender approach within the framework of this project is justified by the need to align with international and national standards in this area in general, but specifically this approach aims to contribute to the effective implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) for sustainable management of Kévazingo through the involvement of women. To achieve effective involvement of women in this process, it is important to question the causes of their disinterest in OI activities and sustainable management of Kévazingo. It is in this perspective that the Non-Governmental Organization Brainforest, responsible for implementing the project, conducted a gender study in communities for its integration into the monitoring of Kévazingo exploitation in the provinces of Woleu-Ntem and Ogooué-Ivindo from October 2 to 9, 2020. The aforementioned study adhered to a rigorous methodology based on the development of a tool by a gender expert. This tool allowed us to conduct a diagnosis through focus groups (men/women) and individual interviews on access, control, and management of natural resources in about ten communities. The results obtained revolve around three main axes: the regulatory and institutional framework of gender and forest management in Gabon (chapter 1), gender analysis in the context of the project (chapter 2), strategies for better involvement of women in independent forest observation and Kévazingo exploitation (chapter 3). General Objective of the Study This study will allow us to measure and evaluate the degree of involvement of men and women in the control, access, and management of natural resources. Specific Objectives Specifically, this study will allow us to formulate proposals for the involvement of women in independent forest observation activities. Methodology To carry out this study, we used an analysis tool developed by a consultant expert in gender issues. On the ground, interviews were conducted in collective meetings and focus groups of men/women. Chapter 1: Regulatory and Institutional Framework of Gender and Forest Management in Gabon Section I: Legal Framework The themes related to gender issues in Gabon find their foundation in Article 2 of the Constitution. Indeed, it states; "The Gabonese Republic ensures the equality of all citizens before the Law without distinction of origin, race, sex, opinion, or religion." The National Gender Strategy of Gabon (SNEG) of 2009 provides an overview of the evolution of this theme. Following the organization of the National Conference in 1990, women will have a key role and place in political governance. Following the national conference, Gabonese women organized

in 1992 the Forum on the situation of Gabonese women "whose objective is to take stock of the condition of women in all areas." Regarding the evolution of the legal and social life of Gabonese women since the principle of equity and equality, we can note the following progress: - The repeal of Ordinance No. 64/69 of October 4, 1969, prohibiting the use of contraceptives and the recognition of the right to contraception by the Charter of Liberties; - The organization of the Gabonese Women's Forum in March 1992. This important meeting will constitute - through various recommendations - the precursor of several actions, activities, and other decisions related to the situation of Gabonese women, both at the institutional, social, legal, political, and economic levels; - Law No. 24/96 of June 6, 1996, relating to political parties, which makes no distinction between men and women in participation in public life; - Law No. 7/96 relating to elections, which makes no discrimination in this matter. In general, the process of gender equality and equity is underway through numerous actions by public authorities in various fields to encourage Gabonese women to engage in the social, economic, and political life of the country. The project "Capacity Building for Effective Involvement of Non-State Actors in the Preservation of Kévazingo" indeed places particular emphasis on gender issues in order to

promote women's participation in the management of natural resources. In terms of land, laws No. 14/63 and No. 15/63 of May 8, 1963, respectively, set the composition of state land and determine the modes of management and alienation on one hand, and the regime of land ownership on the other. Section II: Institutional Framework In Gabon, the institution responsible for the management of natural resources is the Ministry of Water, Forests, Sea, Environment, responsible for Climate Plan and Land Use Plan. Its mission is to implement state policy regarding environmental protection, land management, combating climate change, and protecting nature, wildlife, and flora. This is for the development of a green and resilient economy, benefiting current and future generations. Gabonese Civil Society also plays a prominent role in the management of natural resources, particularly the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Brainforest, which works on the Forest-Environment issue from a dual perspective of support on the ground and monitoring of policies. Its philosophy revolves around considering interdependence in analyzing environmental and social problems, the participation of local populations (Bantu and Indigenous Communities "Pygmies") in general, and women in particular in various processes promoting the recognition of their rights, the promotion of community development, gender approach, and consideration of the specificities of Indigenous Peoples.

Gender issues are at the heart of Brainforest's mandate through the implementation of the "Capacity Building for Effective Involvement of Non-State Actors in the Preservation of Kévazingo" project, which is part of the FAO-EU FLEGT Program funded by the European Union through the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). One of the expectations within this project is to conduct a gender study in the communities for its integration into the monitoring of Kévazingo exploitation.

Chapter 2: Gender Analysis within the Project In the context of this project, we analyzed gender from two main angles: gender in natural resource management, and gender in the context of Kévazingo.

Section I: Analysis of Women's Involvement in Natural Resource Management The gender analysis in natural resource management allowed us to explore the lifestyles of women and men regarding access to natural resources, decision-making, and benefit-sharing within the communities involved in this study.

I- Access to Natural Resources In general, women depend on forests in rural areas for their income and livelihood. Indeed, women living in or near forests conduct most of their activities in these forests and derive part of their income from them.

Interviews and focus groups conducted within the communities as part of this study reveal that regarding access to natural resources, the populations are almost unanimous in stating that women and men have equal access to natural resources without discrimination. However, it is observed that access to natural resources varies according to gender needs. Indeed, women and men do not engage in the same activities in the forest; "it all depends on each person's interest in the forest," the populations in the visited communities told us. The limitations observed in access to natural resources are more a matter of choice than discrimination. In the village of Ebomane in Minvoul in the Woleu-Ntem Province, for example, the focus group with women revealed that "men no longer use the forest as they did in the past. Women now have more access to the forest than men, and this comes from their own will."

If access to and use of natural resources are free for all, is the same true regarding access to information and training?

Before proceeding with the gender analysis regarding access to information and training, it is important to note that training and information enable an individual or group to have the

necessary knowledge for the control and management of an asset, in our case, the control and management of natural resources. Thus, in this section, we aimed to determine whether women and men had the same level of knowledge for the control and management of natural resources. Data collected in the field clearly shows a noticeable contrast. Men have knowledge (knowledge understood as access to information and training) that is significantly higher than that of women. This lack of knowledge constitutes a barrier to women's involvement in natural resource management in general, and in Kévazingo activities in particular. Of the ten villages visited, four (4) villages reported having attended training sessions. Of these four villages, three (3) were informed about the prohibition measures on Kévazingo exploitation, and one (1) village acknowledged having attended training on agricultural techniques with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The table below presents the number of trained individuals by village.

| Table 1: Number of Trained Individuals in the Visited Villages | | Villages | Themes | Number of Trained Individuals | Women | Men | | Zok Loumou | Training on agricultural techniques with IFAD | 5 | 5 | | Okok | Prohibition measures on Kévazingo exploitation | 3 | 0 | | Bobenda | Prohibition measures on Kévazingo exploitation | 1 | 1 | | Massaha | Prohibition measures on Kévazingo exploitation | 6 | 4 | | Subtotal | 15 | 10 | | Total | 25 |

The results contained in the table above do not reflect the reality on the ground in all the visited villages. Indeed, other reasons may justify this gap between women and men in access to information and training. For example, women are much less interested in forestry exploitation activities deemed arduous for them; consequently, related training sessions often do not meet their approval. Such is the case in the village of Okok, where no woman participated in our meeting with the community, despite being invited to this meeting. Cultural or traditional reasons can also be noted, as knowledge about wood species is often passed down to young men by their elders. In the village of Bobenda, for example, women claim to have no knowledge of the names of wood species, which prevents them from engaging in forestry exploitation activities and, consequently, in independent forest observation.

In light of the above, we conclude that access to natural resources is equally free for women and men in terms of use. However, to engage more women in forest independent observation, there must be an increased capacity-building focused on these issues.

II- Decision-Making Regarding decision-making within the communities, we observed a strong presence of women in decision-making bodies. In the village of Massaha in Makokou, for example, we have a woman as the head of the Grouping, and similarly, in the village of Bondenda, also in Makokou, a woman is also the village chief. According to information collected in the field, we found that women's involvement in decision-making varies from one community to another. In the village of Okok in Bitam, for example, the focus group with men reveals that "decisions are made by notables or auxiliaries of command, among whom there are several women."

In the village of Massaha in Makokou, according to the populations, "decisions are made in a general assembly with the participation of the entire village, men and women alike." The situation seems a bit different in some places, particularly in the village of Bobenda, where women say that "in decision-making at the village level, men oppose women's opinions. Men decide alone without the participation of women, who passively attend the meetings." At the same time, men assert that "decisions are made in two (2) groups, men on their side and women on the other. The final decision will come from the group that best guarantees the interests of the entire community." In the village of Ebomane in Minvoul, on the other hand, women claim that in their community, "women are at the center of decisions regarding the development of the village."

When asked whether men think it is important to have more women in decision-making bodies, the majority sees no objection to women's involvement. However, we note that women's involvement in decision-making bodies encounters the remnants of traditional power structures. Men in the Zok Loumou community, for example, believe that "it is a good thing to integrate more women into the decision-making bodies of the village, except that traditional power management involves many negative aspects that often lead women to abstain." In terms of independent observation, on the other hand, men think it is important to involve more women because they spend more time in the forest for their activities, thus making them excellent sentinels.

In summary, we conclude that based on the information collected in the field, women hold a significant place in community decision-making processes. This fact could be an advantage to leverage to facilitate their involvement in independent forest observation activities.

III- In Benefit-Sharing The management of natural resources provides benefits to the surrounding communities that depend on them. An analysis of sharing mechanisms based on a gender approach allowed us to see how the benefits derived from forest management are redistributed at the community level between women and men.

From all the villages visited as part of this study, we note that the sharing of benefits derived from the management of natural resources can occur at two levels.

- At the community level, sharing is done by redistributing benefits based on the number of families without considering the size of each family. This process presents

some advantages for small families, particularly families with only widows. At the family level, it is the men who are at the center of sharing and decide the portion that goes to the women. The risk with this process is that the sharing is not equitable; women are often victims of men's unfair distributions. In summary, the fact that the benefits derived from forest management are shared at the community level presents advantages that are more or less beneficial to women and men. But for effective sharing, redistribution should be done equitably between women's groups and men's groups. Ultimately, the analysis of women's involvement in natural resource management has allowed us to understand that women enjoy free access to the use of resources, but this access remains limited by deficiencies in terms of information and training, which raises the issue of control and management of natural resources by women. What about gender analysis in the context of Kévazingo management? Section II: Gender analysis in the context of Kévazingo management From the analysis of women's involvement in natural resource management arises the gender analysis in the context of Kévazingo management. Indeed, Kévazingo is a species found in the forests of Gabon. The overexploitation of Kévazingo has led the Government to adopt measures prohibiting its exploitation. Similarly, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have followed suit by advocating for sustainable management of Kévazingo through, for example, the project "Capacity Building for Effective Involvement of Non-State Actors in Kévazingo Preservation". The market value of Kévazingo arouses the greed of economic operators and constitutes a source of income for village communities. But do the benefits derived from Kévazingo management serve all communities? A gender analysis in the context of Kévazingo management therefore seems necessary to measure the level of involvement of women and men in the sustainable management of this species. To answer the above question, we used an analytical tool that breaks down into two axes: access, control, and management of Kévazingo. I- Access to Kévazingo From the ten villages visited, it appears that access to Kévazingo is exclusively reserved for men. Testimonies during focus groups (men or women) easily demonstrate this through the voluntary exclusion of women by men in "the sale of Kévazingo". In the village of Bobenda, for example, the focus group with men reveals that "men had the decision in the first sales of Kévazingo"; this assertion is confirmed by the women

of Bobenda themselves, who state that "women did not participate in the decision-making regarding the first sale". Similarly, in the village of Ebomane, we collected the testimony of Ms. Valentine ZE NGWA regarding Kévazingo exploitation: "I wanted to exploit Kévazingo, and the family refused me".

Access to Kévazingo, unlike access to other natural resources, is very limited for women. This situation presents a real challenge for involving them in the sustainable management of this species. II- Control and management of Kévazingo As with the management of natural resources, the control and management of Kévazingo requires us to analyze gender in access to information and training. In the field, the observation is that men are better informed than women about Kévazingo management. In the village of Ebomane in Minvoul, the focus group with women informs us that traditional beliefs prohibited women from accessing under a Kévazingo tree. Of all the villages visited, only one woman has knowledge about Kévazingo management. Indeed, Ms. MOUYIBI Jacqueline from the village of Bobenda in Makokou has participated in logging activities on par with men (Counting and cubing of wood). Overall, women experience both concrete needs and strategic needs. Regarding practical needs, we find that more than the majority of women have no knowledge (information and training) on Kévazingo management, and their very low involvement in Kévazingo management reflects a real strategic need. After addressing the issue of women's involvement in independent forest observation and the sustainable management of Kévazingo, we now turn to proposing strategies for better involvement of the latter. Chapter 3: Strategies for better involvement of women in Independent Forest Observation and sustainable management of Kévazingo In this chapter, we will discuss strategies for better involvement of women in sustainable forest management and formulate some recommendations. Section I: Women's involvement in forest management The strategy for better involvement of women in sustainable forest management will be developed around independent forest observation and sustainable management of Kévazingo. I- Women's involvement in independent forest observation In general, the implementation of independent forest observation relies on access, control, and management of natural resources. Better involvement of women in independent forest observation activities should therefore meet these requirements. The results of our diagnosis on gender and natural resource management show that women's involvement in independent forest observation can be easy provided that they have access to natural resources. Women's participation in decision-making bodies and benefiting from the advantages derived from resource management are also motivations to facilitate their involvement. However, alongside these achievements, we can note certain challenges such as access to information and training. Indeed, many women say they do not have sufficient knowledge to conduct independent observation activities (this was verified during field interviews). As a consequence, it is necessary to organize training and awareness-raising focused on the concrete needs of women regarding sustainable management of natural resources. II- Women's involvement in sustainable Kévazingo management Regarding Kévazingo management, discussions from focus groups conducted in the field reveal that women's involvement is virtually non-existent. Unlike the management of other natural resources, Kévazingo management is exclusively in the hands of men. At this level, the challenges regarding women's involvement are enormous. This will lead us to conduct not only a real advocacy on gender approach and sustainable Kévazingo management but also specific actions to reduce the exclusion of this target concerning Kévazingo. Section II: Some recommendations After this analysis on gender and natural resource management, particularly sustainable Kévazingo management, some recommendations deserve to be made to the various actors in this sector. To the Public Authorities; While already acknowledging their merit in developing the SNEEG, which is a major tool for establishing a diagnosis on gender disparities to be taken into account in all

sectors of activity, we urge the country's governing bodies to initiate more incentive policies aimed at facilitating and encouraging at the community level the involvement of women in natural resource management. The Community Development Project for Combating Illegal Logging (DECEFI) was a good example of involvement. The sustainable management of forest massifs by rural populations was the primary ambition of the project, which was also intended to reduce illegal exploitation of resources and increase the income of the affected populations. To the CSOs, the need to take gender into account in projects must now present itself as an imperative to donors. It is therefore recommended that members of Civil Society undertake capacity building on gender themes in order to conduct advocacy. At the community level, multiply awareness-raising actions on gender themes. Theoretical training should be accompanied by practical cases in the field. For the women in the visited villages, training is a primary need;

-- 12 of 34 --

- More training and awareness sessions on Kévazingo to generate more interest on their part regarding the management of this species; - Raise awareness about sociocultural stereotypes hindering greater involvement of women in the management of Kévazingo. Annexes Annex 1: Images from focus groups

-- 13 of 34 --

Annex 2: Attendance lists

-- 14 of 34 --

-- 15 of 34 --

-- 16 of 34 --

-- 17 of 34 --

-- 18 of 34 --

-- 19 of 34 --

-- 20 of 34 --

-- 21 of 34 --

-- 22 of 34 --

-- 23 of 34 --

-- 24 of 34 --

-- 25 of 34 --

-- 26 of 34 --

-- 27 of 34 --

-- 28 of 34 --

-- 29 of 34 --

-- 30 of 34 --

-- 31 of 34 --

Annex 3: Interview guide

-- 32 of 34 --

34