Study trip on the sharing of experiences from COMIFAC countries regarding the REDD+ pilot projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Voyage d'étude sur le partage d'expériences des pays de la COMIFAC sur les projets pilotes REDD+ de la République Démocratique du Congo (RDC)

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3 1. Context The six forest countries of the Congo Basin (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Republic of the Congo) have committed to coordinating their efforts at the regional level for the conservation and sustainable management of their forests. These countries have clearly expressed their interest in developing national mechanisms to reduce emissions related to deforestation and forest degradation (REDD). Beyond national initiatives, it is relevant to follow REDD issues at the regional level to ensure coordination among countries and the sharing of common objectives. This coordination can ultimately lead to economies of scale. COMIFAC received a grant from the Global

Environment Facility (GEF) in August 2011 for the implementation of the Regional Project for Strengthening Institutional Capacities in REDD+ for Sustainable Forest Management in the Congo Basin (hereinafter referred to as PREREDD+). The development objective of this project is to strengthen the capacities of the countries of the Congo Basin on issues related to REDD+ and particularly on forest carbon stock measures. PREREDD+ has four components. Component 1.a aims to enhance knowledge and REDD+ coordination in the Congo Basin. In accordance with the activities planned in the REDD+ project document, the management unit of this project planned in the 2013 PTBA a study trip to a tropical forest region to capitalize on experiences related to the REDD+ Pilot Project. It was decided to organize this visit in the DRC because this country is relatively the most advanced in Central Africa in terms of REDD+ and especially because it has several REDD-oriented pilot projects. After discussions with the national coordination of the DRC, it was decided to organize these visits to the pilot site of Isangi (120 kilometers from Kisangani) in the Eastern Province. The members of the steering committee decided and proposed the participation of two (2) people per country for this visit. 2. Objectives The objective of this visit was to share the experiences of the DRC with the other COMIFAC member countries involved in the regional REDD+ project. Specifically, it aimed to: promote information exchange and experience sharing in order to stimulate learning among countries on this topic; provide focal points with relevant information to assist them in international negotiations; contribute to strengthening the capacities of experts in the field

4 3. Expected results Experiences from the DRC on REDD+ pilot projects were presented to participants; Lessons learned were drawn by participants based on the exchanges. 4. Participants Participants came from the national REDD+ coordinations of the countries covered by the regional project and representatives of regional civil society organizations involved in REDD+. All expected delegations participated in this mission, except for that of the Republic of the Congo. The list of participants in this mission is in Annex 1. 5. Duration and agenda of the mission The mission lasted seven (7) days and the adopted agenda is attached in Annex 2. 6. Execution of the mission a) 1st Day, August 11, 2013: arrival in Kinshasa of the various delegations b) 2nd Day, August 12, 2013: Working session at the National REDD+ Coordination DRC The delegation led by the Coordinator of the Regional REDD+ Project of COMIFAC went to the CNREDD+ for a working session. The meeting allowed for finalizing logistical details and formalities before departure for Kisangani. Given the constraints of the people to meet, a new agenda was adopted. The final adopted agenda is in Annex 2 of this report. Visit to the Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation, and Tourism (MECNT) The delegation visited the MECNT accompanied by the National REDD+ Coordination for a courtesy visit to the Secretary General of the MECNT. A presentation of the mission's terms of reference and the harmonized agenda was made to him. After welcoming remarks, he inquired about the state of preparation for the field mission, after which he provided logistical support for the smooth running of the mission by making available an urban transport bus from the Ministry and a driver. c) 3rd Day, August 13, 2013: Departure from Kinshasa to Kisangani The delegation was welcomed by the REDD+ Focal Point of the Eastern Province, accompanied by the Coordinator of the Congolese Organization of Ecologists and Friends of Nature (OCEAN), the NGO leading the Isangi pilot project.

5 Working session with the Provincial Minister in charge of Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock, Rural Development, and Environment The delegation led by the National REDD+ Coordinator was received by Mr. Minister, S.E. Milton LONU LONEMA, for an introductory meeting. After presenting the objectives and expected results of the mission, the Minister appreciated the

initiative and wished for the provincial party's support to ensure the success of this mission and made arrangements to lead the delegation to the Provincial Governor. Visit to the Governor of the Eastern Province The delegation led by the Provincial Minister in charge of the Environment was received by the Governor of the Eastern Province S.E. Jean Saïdi BAMANISA. The Minister introduced the delegation to the Governor, then passed the floor to the National REDD+ Coordinator who presented the objectives of the mission as well as its expected results, while specifying that the DRC is one of the two countries chosen within the framework of the regional REDD+ project (PREREDD+) for south-south experience exchanges concerning the implementation of the REDD+ process. This explains the choice of the Eastern Province, one of the major forest provinces of the DRC where two REDD+ pilot projects (geographically integrated pilot projects of Isangi and Mambasa) are being implemented. The Governor welcomed the delegation, expressing satisfaction with the choice of his Province while indicating all the efforts being made at the level of his jurisdiction to not only combat illegal exploitation of forest resources but also to strengthen forest governance that allows the State to recover its revenues from this important sector of the provincial economy. He reminded that the success of the REDD+ process, as well as that of the pilot projects, depends on the local appropriation by both local political authorities and stakeholders, and on the involvement of all stakeholders through inclusive consultations. Given the urgency of the issue, he wished that everything be done much more quickly because for him, "the more time we lose, the more deforestation gains ground and the less effective the responses will be." He then highlighted his participation as a National Deputy in discussions on the establishment of the REDD+ process in the DRC. He then requested more information on the progress of the Isangi project. The Coordinator of OCEAN presented the technical sheet of the project while indicating the challenges and constraints of implementation that have led to significant execution delays given that the project is 10 months from its closure with just 24% disbursement.

 He finally decided to join a provincial support team composed of his environmental advisor, the one from the Minister in charge of the environment, as well as the provincial REDD+ focal point, thus confirming his concern for local ownership. d) 4th Day, August 14, 2013 Working session with project holders A working session bringing together the delegation, project holders, and stakeholders was organized on the execution of the pilot projects in Mambasa and Isangi, implemented respectively by WCS and OCEAN. Priority was given to the presentation of the Mambasa project experience given that the mission could not go there due to the site's remoteness and logistical and financial constraints. The Coordinator of the Mambasa Project, Jean-Rémy MAKANA, along with the implementation partners, presented the REDD+ Mambasa pilot project. This project is divided into four (4) components, some of which are executed by designated national consultants who are responsible for: - The sub-component "land use planning" in component A, by the Organization for Support and Assistance to Pygmies (OSAPY); - The sub-component "Information, Education, and Communication (IEC)" in component A by the Council for the Defense of Community Rights and Environmental Protection (CDPE); - All the sub-components of component C "Ecological, socio-economic monitoring, and baseline data" by the University of Kisangani (UNIKIS). The main lessons learned by the partners of the Mambasa pilot project that emerged from these presentations are as follows: The implementation of the communication strategy must be a prerequisite for all activities to better involve stakeholders (communities and local authorities) and allow for ownership of the process at the sub-national level; The technical training of coordination teams at the beginning of the process is a prerequisite for the implementation of pilot projects; The reconstruction of the country's institutions, basic infrastructure, and the consolidation of territorial integrity constitute an important national condition for the effective implementation of REDD+; The fight against

poverty and access for the entire population to basic social services also constitute one of the success criteria for the implementation of activities related to REDD+.

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7 The difficulties encountered in the implementation of the various sub-components of the project include: Non-compliance with the schedule for the implementation of activities due to the slowness in the disbursement process; The heaviness and complexity of procedures in general and those for the procurement of goods and materials in particular, especially with the death of the Task Team Leader of the AfDB based in Kinshasa; Delays in the acquisition of materials/equipment; The problem of technical leadership at the national and local levels; Insufficient capacity transfer between international experts and local actors; Inadequate institutional arrangement of contracts with various implementation partners. After these clarifications on the Mambasa pilot project, participants from COMIFAC countries engaged in a discussion session, the content of which is in Annex 3. Departure from Kisangani to Isangi by speedboat Initially, the delegation was to leave Kisangani by off-road vehicles, but due to the breakdown of the ferry, the option of renting a speedboat became necessary. Presentation of courtesies to the Administrator of the Territory Upon arrival in Isangi, the delegation presented its courtesies to the Representative of the Administrator of the Territory. Working session with the pilot project holders in Isangi The Coordinator of the Isangi Project, Cyrille ADEBU, presented the project which is divided into four (4) components, some of which are executed by designated national consultants: - The sub-components "Information, Education, and Communication (IEC)" of component A and "capacity building and support for communities on agro-pastoral alternatives" of component B by the Education Program for the Protection and Conservation of Nature (PCN); - All the sub-components of the component "Ecological, socio-economic monitoring, and baseline data" by the University of Kisangani (UNIKIS); - The sub-component "livelihoods and economic development" by IFA; - The component "support for community agroforestry" by INERA. From the various presentations, it appears that the project faced the same difficulties as those encountered in the implementation of the Mambasa project with some specificities including:

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8 - The distrust of the populations related to political manipulations; - Conflicts from all sides (sequestration of the two project vehicles, land conflicts in certain areas, etc.) - The decrease in credibility at the local level due to delays in disbursements; - Logistical problems related to the accessibility of project sites. It was on these exchanges and discussions that the day of August 14, 2013, ended at 10:00 PM. e) 5th Day, August 15, 2013 Working session with the Rural Agricultural Management Council (CARG) The Coordinator of the Isangi Project briefly introduced the Committee, then its members presented their activities. The presentation focused on the difficulties encountered in the implementation of activities: - Confusion among villagers between the actions of the REDD+ pilot project and those of land grabbing; - Manipulations by politicians who convey false messages; - Rivalries between villages and between communities that are often exacerbated in the implementation of project activities; - The delay in disbursements compared to the structuring of peasant organizations makes farmers distrustful of the project's promises. Meeting in the village of Lilanda After discussions with the CARG, the delegation went to the village of Lilanda, one of the host villages of the project monitored by UNIKIS for the evaluation of carbon stock. The delegation had a contact and explanation meeting with the riverside populations of the project, in the local language (Lingala). The National REDD+ Coordinator introduced the mission and made the populations understand their crucial role in the implementation of REDD+, in stabilizing the global climate, and in preserving the forest. In this regard, the speech was to say, "a tree is better standing than cut." Then the

populations expressed their difficulties in monitoring the project: - The time spent monitoring project activities does not allow the facilitators to carry out their own activities; - The financial support during activities is insufficient. Visit to the carbon stock evaluation device in Lilanda

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9 The carbon stock evaluation device was set up by UNIKIS. A total of 300 plots are planned to be installed, including 160 in primary forest, 70 in secondary forest, and 70 in fallow land. The visited plot No. 48 is located in a primary forest area about 7 km from the village of Lilanda. Mr. Faustin BOYEMBA, a professor at UNIKIS and responsible for this activity, explained to the delegation the different methodologies used for site selection, the arrangement of plots, methodologies, and devices for collecting DBH and tree heights. After these explanations, the delegation engaged in a discussion through a question-and-answer session. It was on this discussion that the visit to the experimental carbon stock evaluation plots ended. Return to Kisangani Given the late hour at which the field visit ended, the return to Kisangani by speedboat was no longer possible, and was done by road in a rental vehicle, then by canoe for the crossing on the Tshopo River. f) 6th Day, August 16, 2013 Debriefing with the Provincial Minister in charge of the environment Contrary to the agenda's forecasts, the schedule of the Provincial Minister in charge of the environment, who was preparing for his trip to Kinshasa, did not allow him to have time for the mission debriefing. Return to Kinshasa The delegation left Kisangani for Kinshasa around 4:30 PM. g) 7th Day, August 17, 2013

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10 This day was dedicated to finalizing and validating the Mission Report, as well as evaluating it at the CNREDD. 7. Lessons learned and recommendations Involvement and ownership of stakeholders The low involvement and lack of ownership lamented by both local political authorities and local communities have a negative impact on the success of projects. It is recommended in this regard to develop strategies that ensure effective involvement and ownership of stakeholders and that lead to their commitment to the implementation of the process and field projects. Communication and consultation The delegation lamented a deficit in communication and insufficient consultations with stakeholders in general and populations in particular, which have impacts on the understanding of the REDD+ mechanism and on the implementation of projects. It is recommended to develop communication and consultation strategies prior to the implementation of projects that take into account the specificities of each target. Recommendations Regarding the institutional arrangement of projects, project holders should ensure that they have clearly defined the roles of each party and especially that tasks are well specified in contracts. As for the capacity building of national actors assigned to projects, it is important to make the most of the presence of international experts to develop skills transfer strategies. The procedures for implementing activities must take into account the various administrative burdens of donors, and especially project holders must ensure that they know and respect the procedures. For managing inter-community conflicts, it is essential to conduct a preliminary study to determine the forces at play, the balance of power in each village, and to bring together the different conflicting parties to get them used to working together. Care should be taken in the choice of financial management software as some are not compatible with the international standards proposed by donors while others are very complex to use and require ensuring capacity building for the teams responsible for using them. For the use of satellite images for mapping and GIS, it is preferable to use orthorectified images (See ASTRIUM).

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11 8. Conclusion The agenda for the field visit was not fully exhausted due to the short duration of the visits. The difficulties related to transportation allowed for a rearrangement of this

agenda, and ultimately the local radio station and the cassava cutting multiplication station for agroforestry were not visited. Visiting these two structures in Yangambi could have provided more visibility to the participants in line with the implementation of the pilot projects. The evaluation of the mission highlighted certain points that deserve much attention during future similar missions: - Protective materials and equipment for the field; - Better organization and coordination of logistics, particularly transportation; The mission took place without incident. Participants left with many lessons learned that they can apply in their daily work and for the development of REDD pilot projects, particularly the involvement and ownership of stakeholders and communication, which are the cornerstones of a successful REDD+ project. Additionally, there is a need for genuine support from financial partners for effective execution of programs according to forecasts. They thank the REDD+/COMIFAC/World Bank project for organizing this sharing mission to capitalize on the experiences of the DRC regarding REDD+ pilot projects and hope to soon experience the successful experiences of other continents. They also thank the Congolese Government for accepting this mission, particularly Mr. Vincent KASULU, Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism, the Governor of the Oriental Province, H.E. Jean Saïdi BAMANIS, local authorities, and the CNREDD for their multifaceted support for logistics.

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12 ANNEXES

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13 Annex 1: Attendance List No. Name and Surname Position Organization and Country Contacts 1. Hervé MAÏDOU Coordinator of the Regional REDD+ COMIFAC herve_maidou@yahoo.fr 2. Victor KABENGELE National Coordinator REDD+ RD Congo abckab@gmail.com 3. Rufine Roselinde DJEUTCHOU Communication Officer, National Coordination REDD+, Cameroon redd_minep@yahoo.fr 4. Téclaire NGOH NJOUME Member of the Team MNV, National Coordination REDD+, Cameroon tclaire2012@yahoo.fr 5. Antonio MICHA ONDO National Focal Point Fight against Desertification and Member of the REDD+ team, Equatorial Guinea ammicha025@gmail.com 6. Gabriel NGUA AYECABA President of the NGO ANDEGE, Representative of civil society, Equatorial Guinea boscuyami2005@yahoo.es 7. Protet ESSONO ONDO Brainforest, Representative of civil society in the context of UNFCCC negotiations, Gabon essono.ondopj@gmail.com 8. Blandine GAHORO Head of the SESA component of CNREDD+ Central African Republic (CAR) bpdeali@yahoo.fr 9. BIA Philomène Anicette President of the NGO Women and Environment, Representative of civil society within CNREDD+ Central African Republic (CAR) bata_gbako@yahoo.fr 10. Patrick BISIMWA National Project Officer within CNREDD+, DRC patbisimwa@yahoo.fr

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14 Annex 2: Final Program adopted and implemented Day and date Time Activities Observation Monday 12/08/2013 11:30 13:00 13:00 14:00 Visit to CN REDD Courtesy visit to Mr. the Secretary General Tuesday 13/08/2013 8:00 Departure from Ndjili airport, Kinshasa 12:30 Arrival at Bangboka airport, Kisangani 14:00 14:30 Installation of visitors at the Hotel 15:00 17:00 Presentation of courtesies and Briefing to H.E. Mr. the Provincial Minister in charge of Environment and to H.E. Mr. the Governor Wednesday 14/08/2013 8:00 11:30 Working session of the COMIFAC Delegation with the teams of REDD projects ISANGI and MAMBASA, Advisor to the Governor in charge of Environment, the Experts from the Provincial Ministry of Environment, the Provincial Coordinator of Environment and the PFP/REDD+, at the meeting room of TROPENBOS: - Summary of objectives and results of

the two projects by the Implementers (Isangi & Mambasa) - Some specific achievements by the partners (INERA, PCN, IFA, UNIKIS, etc.) Thirty participants 14:00 Departure from Kisangani to ISANGI 11 people from the delegation, the Advisor to the Governor, the Advisor to the Minister, the PFP/REDD+, 7 from the ISANGI project team 18:00 Arrival and Installation at the Convent of the Sisters 19:00 Presentation of courtesies to the Administrator of the Territory of Isangi 20:00 22:00 Working session with the management team of the Pilot REDD+ Isangi (Congolese Organization of Ecologists and Friends of Nature, UNIKIS) Thursday 15/08/2013 8:00 9:00 Working session with CARG, meeting room of the Convent of the Sisters, Discussions on the land use planning process and land security issues CARG regional Agricultural management council 10:30 13:00 Stop at Lilanda: Contact with beneficiaries at Lilanda Visit of the carbon stock assessment device at Lilanda (inventory plots set up by UNIKIS) Field attire required (boots, jeans, raincoat) 13:30 18:00 Return to Kisangani Friday 16/08/2013 9:00 11:00 Debriefing of the COMIFAC Delegation with H.E. Mr. the Provincial Minister in charge of Environment 11:00 Preparations for return to Kinshasa

15 Annex 3: report of the discussion session Participant Questions Answers Pilot project Mambassa Philomène CAR Why was rural exodus not taken into account in the causes of deforestation? Rural exodus due to wars is a real cause of deforestation, but it was considered an indirect cause. Was gender consideration effectively included in the process? Yes, gender was taken into account in the project design, but the realities on the ground are different. Antonio Equatorial Guinea What are the key aspects that were taken into account in the technical capacity building sessions? They considered the administrative and project management aspects at the central level and not at the local level. If the images have a high cost as announced in the presentation, does it mean that the country has not signed agreements for acquiring satellite images at reduced cost with certain partners? For the images, there is a contract between the DRC and ASTRIUM. Gabriel Equatorial Guinea In the results presented, the project already announces a 50% reduction in deforestation, is this a reasonable figure in 2 years of implementation? The 50% is an expected result at the end of the project. For now, we have not yet evaluated the implementation, but the state of disbursements indicates 24% execution. Blandine CAR Is artisanal mining a real factor of deforestation? If so, what compensation system was put in place at the time of relocating artisanal miners? This is not a significant cause of deforestation at the moment. Given that the State owns the forests and only grants rights to populations with usufruct rights, have you faced land conflicts especially since some heirs of forest plots consider themselves owners? To date, no land conflict has been recorded, but otherwise, the project has a conflict resolution committee. Rufine Cameroon Is sustainable forest management limited to micro-zoning within the framework of this project? No, micro-zoning is just the first step of the process that allows for allocating spaces to activities. Then we will implement sustainable forest management activities. You say that at the national level, there is a large team and at the local level, there is a lack of personnel. Did the RPP not foresee the decentralization of teams at the provincial level? YES, the R-PP had planned but it remains just plans. The problem lies not in the design but in the implementation. There are provincial focal points but with very limited resources. Have the drivers of deforestation been classified according to precise data? Yes, there have been 3 preliminary studies and the causes have been classified as presented in the presentation. How did you identify the representatives of the communities? And how do you ensure that local leaders faithfully relay the information? The project first identified the communities and they delegate representatives chosen with the support of

local leaders. For feedback, the project provides a bonus to ensure that these

16 representatives should do their job well in representing the interests of the communities and providing feedback on the project's activities to the community. What communication strategy have you adopted towards the authorities? In the communication strategy of this pilot project, local authorities are used as mobilizers of local populations. You have focused the maximum of your IEC activities towards indigenous peoples, which is not in line with your drivers of deforestation. How do you explain that? If the communication strategy is developed based on the observation of the drivers a priori on the ground, the PA should not be concerned by the IEC strategy. But within the framework of this project, the PA are used as models to follow. They are mobilized so that their endogenous knowledge is valued as "best practices." But also, they are contacted to make the mechanism inclusive and touch on potential points that a priori observation had not taken into account. Téclaire Cameroon What methodology did you use to identify the plots of the inventory blocks? The methodology for the plots was used taking into account the area, the project zone, ecological variability at each stratum, and altitude. The area of primary forests is higher than that of other forests, which is why we have more inventory block plots in primary forests. How do you involve local communities in the MRV, especially in measuring and monitoring carbon stock? It is UNIKIS that is responsible for the ecological monitoring component. A teacher from UNIKIS and 15 local technicians have benefited from training and capacity building in MRV. To develop your reference scenario, what reference year did you use given that you do not have satellite images of the project area from the year 2012 and 2000? The chosen reference year is 2012, although we only have images from 2010 and on the ground, we notice a significant difference between 2010 and 2012. At what level are you with the development of indicators on forest cover? There are activities being carried out to define the indicators (monitoring of vegetation and socio-economic aspects). Monitoring socio-economic aspects poses a problem because they do not yet have the data. Pilot project Isangi Antonio Guinea Eq What are the criteria established for the selection of sites for pilot projects? The criteria are the levels of deforestation, pressures on forest formations, and the different drivers of deforestation. What are the main causes of land conflicts? The main causes are related to land rights and issues regarding forest use rights. Philomène, RCA Despite the number of awareness sessions on REDD+ directed at the populations, why is their understanding difficult? In the two villages, existing land conflicts between the communities foster a certain mistrust and prevent a better understanding of the process. What are the benefits you have gained from implementing your activity? The populations better understand the importance of the forest and the fight against changes, leading to a gradual understanding of REDD+. Gabriel Guinea Eq You did not plan for the estimation of underground carbon; how can you therefore make a good assessment of carbon stock? In the context of this project, the estimation of underground carbon was not planned due to lack of equipment (200kg scale) and technical capacities. What allometric equation (AE) will be used considering that Central Africa has not yet defined its specific AEs? The question was posed to the funding agency (BAD) because to develop a specific AE, significant technical, material, and financial resources are needed. If the funding agency does not respond favorably, the project will use existing AEs. Protet Gabon What are the criteria for identifying pilot zones if we can already have two identical projects in the same province? In the same province, the two sites present different landscapes both geographically and culturally. In this context, the location of the project

and the types of drivers of deforestation were determining in the choice of sites. Téclaire Cameroon What approach is used to manage conflicts between the two villages Yaékéla and Lilanda? Mixed meetings are organized between the two communities by the project leader to bring them to work together. How did you manage to convince the population to reduce deforestation in their village? By strengthening their capacities on new agricultural techniques

and helping them achieve better agricultural production without putting pressure on the forest. Rufine Cameroon You mentioned the purchase of solar panels in the Isangi project; what is the purpose of this investment? The purchase of solar panels addresses the need to provide the field team with an alternative energy source to ensure the proper functioning of the project base. It should be noted, however, that the purchased solar panels are not functional because the project's setup did not budget for the installation and operation of this equipment. Why specifically choose to strengthen capacities on the TOMPRO software, why not another management software? Initially, the project had requested to work with SAGE and SARI as financial management software, but for compatibility needs with the funder's software, the BAD, it was ultimately TOMPRO that was used despite its complexity. Are there misunderstandings related to the impacts of REDD+ at the community level? Villagers, claiming to be rightful forest owners, still believe that the pilot project should distribute money to the point of putting pressure on the project team for the signing of bargaining contracts.