



# International Conference on Sustainable Mangro Ecosystems: Managing a vital resource for achieving the SDGs and the Paris Agreement

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## Session 3: Enhancing the sustainable livelihoods of mangrove-dependent communities

Women's response activities in the restoration and management of mangroves in Cameroon



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# Content



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- General information on Cameroon Mangroves
- What do Mangroves mean for local communities and for women?
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- Key Lessons learnt and perspectives



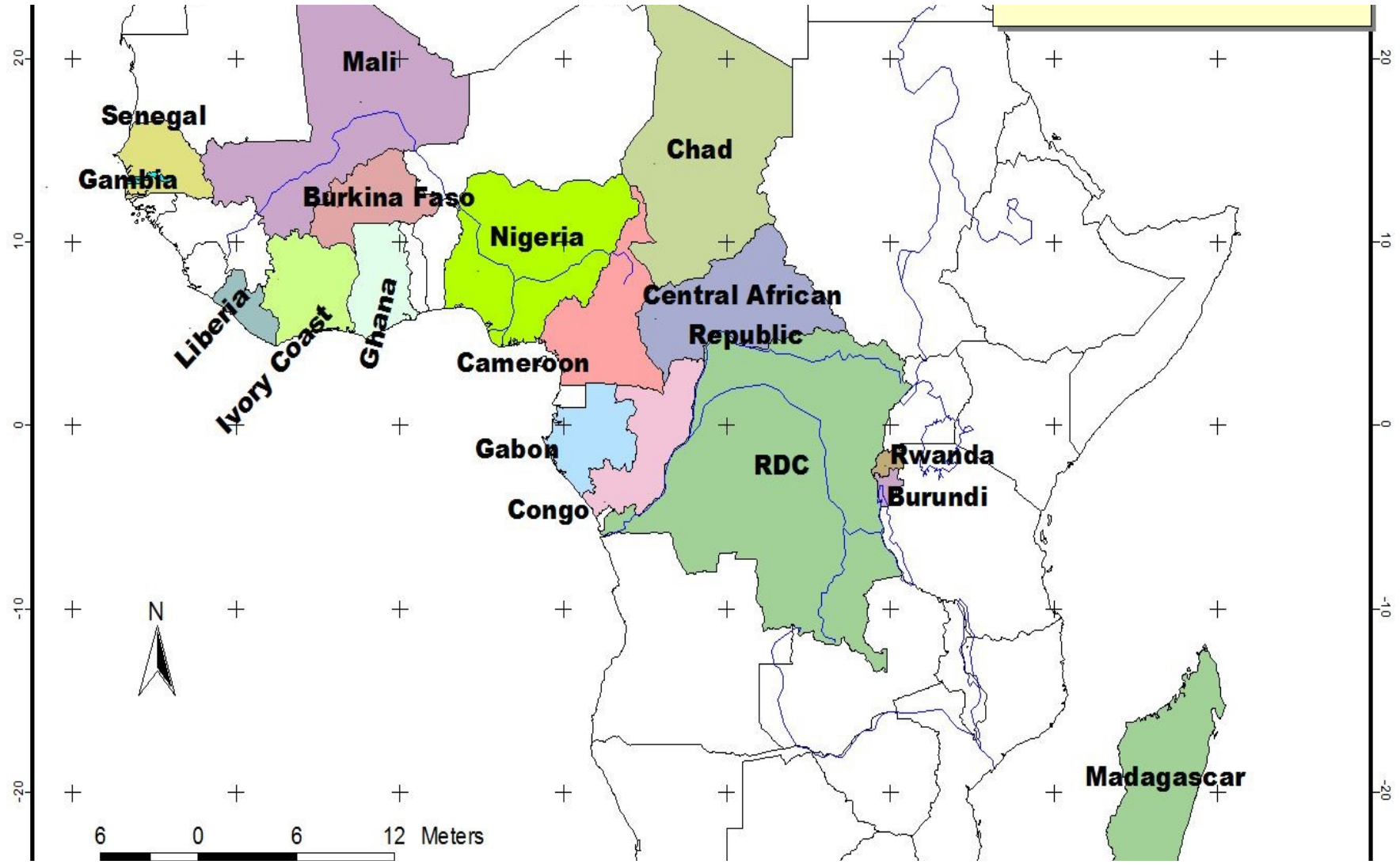
# The African women's Network for community management of forests (REFACOF)



- Created in May 2009 in Yaoundé, Cameroon
- Composed of 17 West and Central African countries and Madagascar
- REFACOF is **an advocacy platform** focused on African women's **tenure rights** in land and forest reforms

## ***Mission:***

- Promote women's rights in Africa and influence policy to achieve gender equity in land and forest tenure
- 5-year strategic plan with 4 strategic pillars: Capacity building, Equitable, Tenure reforms, Advocacy and experience sharing



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# Cameroon's Mangroves general information



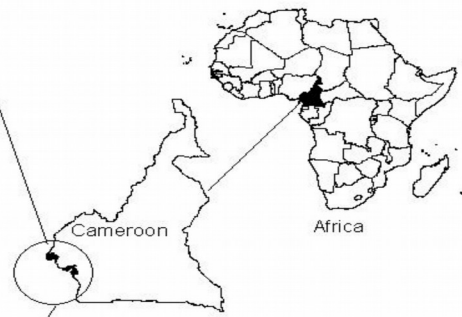
- The total area of Cameroon mangroves is **232.723 ha**; they are part of the Gulf of Guinea Mangroves and are spread over about 177km; that is **30%** of the 590 km of the coast of Cameroon.
- Cameroon Mangroves are divided into three main zones: (1) the Rio Del Rey, (2) the Cameroon estuary and (3) the Rio Ntem
- Four main species: (1) *Rhizophora racemosa* (red mangrove), the most widely represented species, (2) *Rhizophora Avicenia* (white mangrove) developed along the main canals, (3) *Rhizophora mangle* and (4) *Rhizophora harrisoni*
- Very rich in fauna, flora and hydro biodiversity

### Légende

- Chef-lieu d'Arrondissement
- Chef-lieu de Département
- Chef-lieu de Région
- Mangrove
- Plan d'eau
- Réseau routier



CAMEROON MANGROVES MAP





# Cameroon's Mangroves general information (2)



- Cameroonian mangroves undergo very strong human pressure and multiple threats
- Annual deforestation rate is 2,5% in average (FAO, 2007 and CIFOR 2011)
- Key drivers of deforestation in the mangrove areas are :
  - Population growth of the neighboring cities such as Douala, Edéa, Kribi, Tiko, etc.: **20%** of the populations live in the Mangrove area
  - Uncontrolled urban development of neighboring cities : Douala, Edéa, Kribi, Tiko, Yabassi, Ekondo Titi, etc.
  - Illegal exploitation of mangrove forests as a source of energy and timber: **40%** of households in Douala use mangrove wood as a source of energy; **70%** of the bakeries in Douala use mangrove wood for their ovens; mangrove poles are used as building materials for more than **60%** in Douala!



# Cameroon's Mangroves general information (3)



- Abusive and non-regulatory fishing
- The extension of agro-industrial palm oil and rubber plantations : **60.000 ha** are currently established in the mangroves area
- Oil and Gas exploration and exploitation activities by foreign Oil companies: **400 ha** of mangroves have been destroyed by those companies
- Chemical and organic pollution of mangrove ecosystems from industries: the city of Douala has an average of **11 types of industries** that dump their waste along the coast!
- Lack of effective control of illegal activities in mangrove ecosystems: the government staff is not sufficient and does not have adequate equipment to play this role!
- Lack of an appropriate legal and institutional framework for the mangrove ecosystem

It is currently estimated that only **20-25%** of the mangroves





# What do Mangroves mean for local communities and specifically for women?



- As for everyone, mangroves are of great importance from the biological, ecological, economic and cultural point of view.
- For local communities and for the women, mangroves are vital for their lives: they are their means of living, their homes, their sources of food, of revenues, medicine, ...
  - Carry out their agricultural and fishing activities
  - Use the wood for energy and for housing
  - They use mangroves as sacred sites for traditional practices and ceremonies; as well as for leisure and tourism
  - Collect Non timber forest products for the market, for food and for medicine
  - Collect drinking water, etc.



# Women at the fore front of Mangroves restoration



- Women are more involved in fish processing, NTFP exploitation, food crop production. They generate substantial income through the sale of fish, oysters, non-timber forest products and sometimes agricultural products.
- It is estimated that women can mobilize up to **USD 300,000** yearly as income from fish and oyster marketing
- They also use very important amount of mangrove wood to dry the fish; they count among drivers of deforestation in the mangrove areas. At least **2500 m<sup>3</sup>** of wood are used per day to smoke fish!



# Women at the fore front of Mangroves restoration



- **Why is mangrove restoration important: key issues from the women's perspective:**
  - Mangroves are disappearing very rapidly; and this is a big threat for their lives, that of their families and for the society
  - Fish production is reducing and some high value high fish are disappearing
  - The sea level is increasingly rising and women fear a tsunami in the coming years if nothing is done
  - Floods become more important especially after the rains
  - Soils are increasingly of poor quality, which reduces agricultural production; many food products get rot before their maturity
  - The water is increasingly salty, so unsuitable for consumption



# Women at the fore front of Mangroves restoration (2)



- What do women do?
  - Establishment of mangrove three nurseries
  - Mainstreaming agroforestry practices into food cultivation
  - Improved cook stoves initiatives to reduce the utilization of wood from mangrove
  - Development of alternative income generation ac





# Main results



- More than 25 women groups engaged in mangrove rehabilitation and restoration
- 50.000 mangrove seedlings produced in women's nurseries
- 25.000 seedlings planted in the degraded mangroves area
- Increased awareness on the importance of mangroves among women and young people
- Some alternative activities developed such as vegetable production, bee keeping, etc.





## Key Lessons learnt



- The key issues in mangrove rehabilitation and restoration are related to funding, tenure security and private sector engagement:
  - Need for important funding mobilization
  - Need for policy and regulatory framework to secure the mangroves that have been rehabilitated by women and other social groups, and to promote sustainable management of mangroves in general
  - Need to support other income generating activities as alternatives to mangrove overexploitation for the women and local communities as they strongly depend on mangrove ecosystems for their livelihoods
  - Need to engage the private sector in mangrove restoration as their activities are among the key drivers of mangrove degradation and have a negative impact on the life of local populations including women
  - Need to address the increasing extension of big palm oil and rubber plantations



## Perspectives and conclusion



- **Engaging women and local communities in the sustainable management of mangroves will be effective if:**
  - Women are empowered with:
    - Adequate financial resources to develop mangrove-friendly alternative activities
    - Adequate technical capacities in relation with mangrove silviculture as well as rehabilitation and restoration techniques
  - The energy crisis is adequately addressed: wood from mangrove is highly appreciated as source of energy. To stop the illegal exploitation of wood from mangrove, alternative sources of energy have to be developed.
  - Gender is mainstreamed throughout the various processes: women activities, needs and interests are very specific. It is therefore very important to address the sustainable management of mangroves with a gender perspective



## Perspectives and conclusion



- The private sector should be engaged in sustainable management of mangrove
- A collective action should be taken with global funding mechanisms to address the key drivers of mangrove degradation
- Up scaling the successful initiatives carried out by women and local populations
- Women and local populations should be provided livelihood alternatives and get directly engaged in all processes related to the sustainable management of mangroves





# Thank you for your attention!

