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Ex-post evaluation of Project PD 392/06 Rev.2 (F)

**« PHASE 1: Regional Project to Promote Reduced Impact
Logging in the Congo Basin »**

Executive Summary

Prepared for ITTO

by

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Introduction and general context

Project PD 392/06 Rev.2 (F) : « Phase 1: Regional project to promote Reduced Impact Logging in the Congo Basin », based in Gabon, was implemented over a 2-year period between March 2008 and March 2010 (extended till July to prepare and submit the completion report). At the close of the project, and in order to draw the lessons and obtain final results before proceeding with the formulation of a Phase II project, the Government of the Republic of Gabon requested an ex-post evaluation of the completed project. The CRF Committee agreed to this evaluation during its 44th Session in December 2010.

The objective of the project is to promote and achieve sustainable forest management among the logging companies in Gabon and the Central African Region by implementing Reduced Impact Logging practices incorporating fauna conservation concerns. The two specific objectives ascribed to this project were as follows:

- a) **Raising the awareness to and promotion of RIL in the regional** through, *inter alia*, demonstrating the opportunities and feasibilities of RIL under different conditions; and
- b) **Providing training and improving the complete range of RIL courses** in the Region and the creation of training capacities including through building those of existing vocational training institutes

The situation expected at project completion as introduced in the project document was as follows : Governments will have included RIL as a condition for skilful forest management and the granting and management of a forest concession.

Conventional logging will be replaced by reduced impact logging in large sections of the Gabonese territory: concessionaires and contractors will hire RIL-trained personnel and will apply RIL techniques in their forest operations.

To ensure long-term RIL practices, schools and national institutes and vocational training institutes will be used as permanent RIL training centres. Preferably, these centres will have established one or two RIL model forests for training.

Synthesis of results

Difficulties encountered

The overall implementation and outcomes of the project can only be understood in the light of the major challenges and stumbling blocks the project had to overcome on its path, which considerably slowed down its progress. They include *inter alia* :

Operational equipment and resources made available very late, which hampered the delivery of project outputs :

- **Logging equipment made available past scheduled dates** to implement activities within the pilot forest seriously hampered project activities;
- **Machinery inappropriate to local context;**
- **The international financial crisis** of late 2008 and 2009 hit the logging companies and compromised their commitments as some had to interrupt their business activities;
- **The sudden stopping of log exports** late 2009 also jeopardized the business of some logging companies with opted to postpone their investments in training;
- Budget cuts caused by the unfavourable foreign exchange rate with the US dollars, which lost about 15% of its value while the project objectives remained unchanged.
- The organizational set up provided for at the start of the project included a number of collaborating agencies such as ATO, IUCN/BRAC, the University of Libreville which were not involved in project implementation.

Achievements, Impacts and Effects

The overall impact of the project has been mixed with some significant achievements from the training perspective with private logging companies, ENEF and to a lesser degree Governmental organizations, and some partial accomplishments, mainly due to delays in the pilot forest establishment process and an all too ambitious project design.

The positive outcome of the project is mostly in the number of logging companies which continue to apply RIL techniques as they were taught (see next chapter) and the current development of RIL training curricula within ENEF.

Apart from these more or less significant direct impacts relating to the project objectives, the project has not yet produced any tangible or long-lasting results either on the environment or the local communities. This state of fact certainly does not undermine the value of the RIL approach as such, as it has produced benefits in many places in the world, **but is an indication that these benefits require a longer period of implementation and ownership for them to acquire the expected scale and effects.** Therefore, this project may be regarded as a key step or a stepping stone towards a second phase project which will develop and expand the early achievements and make its impact on the local environmental condition and communities more significant. For all practical purposes, local communities have not been involved in the implementation of this project, apart from those local forestry workers who received training.

Specific objective n°1 : Raising the awareness to and promotion of RIL in the regional through, <i>inter alia</i> , demonstrating the opportunities and feasibilities of RIL under different conditions.				
Output 1.1 : Completion of a demonstration area to demonstrate the differences between CE (Conventional Logging) and RIL in the forest devoted for training				
Activities	Implementation	Significance of impact	Level of sustainability	Ownership by project partners
1.1.1 Completion of operations in the demonstration blocks using both techniques: conventional logging and reduced impact logging	100%	Strong	Weak	Weak
1.1.2 Studies and demonstration on the various differences of impact between the two methods	> 50%			
1.1.3 Ground marking of the various perceptible differences between RIL and CE,	> 50%			
1.1.4 Detailed reporting on differences with comments	> 50%			
1.1.5 Acquisition of an adjacent forest area representing the types of forests requested and appropriate for long-running RIL training courses.	0%			
Output 1.2 : A study of the level of dependence to governmental financial support for the viability of a self-sufficient training centre after completion of phases 1 & 2				
1.2.1 Assessing the level of interest demonstrated and attendance recorded during the various courses	100%	Strong	Average	Weak
1.2.2 Analysis of the costs «completed» by the project under operation	100%			
1.2.3 Feasibility study and cost forecast on the creation of affiliated training centres in other Congo Basin countries				
1.2.4 Realistic prognoses on future course attendance and information collected from the various institutions in the Congo Basin				
1.2.5 Interviews, survey of former, present and potential future sponsors	>50%			
1.2.6 Developing a cost-benefit analysis of the RIL Training infrastructure and human resource capacity after project completion.	>50%			
Output 1.3 : Completion of the RIL Feasibility study (costs & revenue) in SEEF Concession (RILSIM software)				
1.3.1 Introduction of the RILSIM software of different capacities, whether or not applying RIL techniques in the different regions	0%	Average	Weak	Weak
1.3.2 Study and analysis of activity 1.3.1 at the level of the pilot company and preparation of a detailed report and a cost-benefits analysis.	<50%			
Output 1.4 : Information on RIL «pros and cons» provided to target groups				

1.4.1 Compilation of a Power Point and hard-copy presentation of the RIL Training Project	100%	Strong	Average	Strong
1.4.2 Conducting workshops on RIL courses for Congo Basin countries and distribution of the presentation to all parties concerned.	100%			
1.4.3 Survey of opinions of all relevant persons and partner institutions on RIL implementation in their institutions.	>50%			
1.4.4 Report on Activities 1.4.2 and 1.4.3	100%			
Specific objective n°2 : Drafting, improving and providing the complete range of RIL courses in the Region and the creation of training capacities including through building those of existing vocational training institutes				
Output 2.1 RIL Training Centre near the training forest				
2.1.1 RIL Training completed for trainers and teachers	<50%	Average	Weak	Weak
2.1.2 Facilities to be established in the Centre	100%			
Output 2.2 : Personnel trained in Gabon in partnership with schools and tertiary education institutes at all levels: civil servants; trainers and assistant; company executives and staff; students from schools and forest institutions				
2.2.1 Preparation of courses and invitation to participants	>50%	Strong	Average	Strong
2.2.2 Teaching the courses (all developed modules)				
2.2.3 Evaluation of courses and their results	100%			
Output 2.3 : Introductory course for specialists and supervisors from neighbouring countries				
2.3.1 Compilation of a Power Point and hard-copy presentation of the RIL Training Project	100%	Weak	Weak	Weak
2.3.2 Organizing RIL workshops in Gabon for guest trainees from the Congo Basin and dissemination of PPT presentation to all stakeholders	0%			
2.3.3 A summary module covering all RIL disciplines	100%			
2.3.4 Invitations to enroll the training courses in the training centre and/or appointments to undertake training in the forest concessions	0%			
Output 2.4 : Vocational training institute for RIL Training in a third country				
2.4.1 Selection of and liaising with, a potential institute	>50%	Weak	Average	Weak
2.4.2 Initiating the RIL model forest selection and development processes	0%			
Output 2.5 : Project proposal for a continued extension in the Region: Phase 2				
2.5.1 Establishing an outline and an analysis of Outputs 1.2 and 1.3 in order to generate feasibility data on Gabon guidelines for a feasibility study in the relevant countries and a questionnaire to be submitted to the parties concerned in relevant countries	>50%	Strong	Strong	Strong

2.5.2 A presentation of the Project in Gabon to concerned parties				
2.5.3 Project proposal to continue project extension in the Region.				

Availability of resources

The available capacity to ensure the transitional period between this phase and a possible second phase has been particularly limited: no project manager to finalize the documents, no more financial resources to produce the documents, production undertaken by the PAPPFG project, reduced the national team, work in-house at FORM International in Europe.

In the end, and while the Steering Committee and all project partners had expressed their intention to provide for a transitional phase that would maintain a minimal level of activities, lack of resources was such that it proved impossible to meet these expectations. **A year and a half after project completion, it is unfortunate to find that there has been a loss of momentum caused by this state of fact.**

Project formulation and implementation process

Stakeholder participation

The major stakeholders in the project (Government departments, training institutions, private sectors) were not sufficiently involved in the identification of this project, in particular not adequately involved in the relevance of a field-level training centre. This might have spared the energy wasted on setting up the centre while a lighter structure enabling surveys in the pilot forest could have been considered. This does not affect the value of the project nor the high level of expectation from all parties as soon as it started.

+++ : strong, ++average, + weak, 0 : marginal	
Stakeholders	Commitment
TFF	+
FORM International	+++
Forestry Administration	+
ENEF	++
Logging companies	++
PAPPFG	++
Local communities	0
ITTO	+

Project structure

The recurring request made by private companies for more training in RIL -- despite an unfavourable economic context -- shows their strong interest for this approach. While training in the ENEF have not fully achieved their objective, demand remains very strong for these skills. **Therefore, the vertical logic oriented towards these two major stakeholders can not be criticized.**

However, the vertical structure upstream, at the level of implementing agencies, is more complicated to grasp by stakeholders. The involvement of TFF had been hardly noticeable at all as FORM International had the prime role of leading effective, field-level actions. However, none of the documents prepared by the project describes this structure and all refer to TFF.

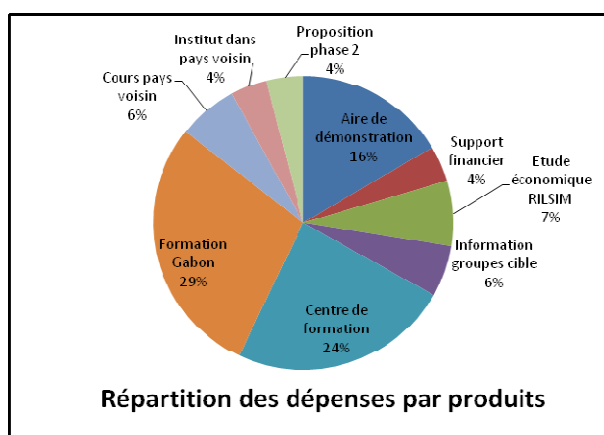
Beyond the organizational structure of the project, the logical framework submitted in the project document is quite clear in the proposed approach, hinging on two major objectives. However, **the logical framework had been developed several years before the start of the project, which called for it to be revised** by the time the project was about to start and submitted to the various partners for approval.

The horizontal logic of the framework could have been a little better specified at the level of activities.

Financial analysis

→ 65% of the budget devoted to Objective 2 is a reflection of the "training" orientation of this project.

→ Training Center, analysis of a financial support and economic study of the RILSIM software have spent a substantial portion (of the budget).



Répartition des dépenses par produits : Distribution of expenditures by Outputs
Cours pays voisin: Course in neighbour country; *Institut dans pays voisin*: Institute in neighbour country;
Proposition phase 2: Phase 2 proposal; *Support financier*: Financial support; *Etude économique RILSIM*
 (RILSIM Economic study); *Information groupe cible*: Target group information; *Formation Gabon*: Training in
 Gabon; *Aire de démonstration*: Demonstration area; *Centre de formation*: Training centre.

Reporting

The reports provided by the project were difficult to obtain. This can be understandable more than a year after project completion, but also reflects a problem to centralize this critical information for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

A website was set up presenting progress and developments related to the project and the training modules. **It is regrettable that no progress reports or any other project reports are downloadable from this website.** However, FORM has informed that this project report dissemination method is about to be arranged.

Project Monitoring

Project monitoring missions were conducted at regular intervals by the experts of FORM International and monitoring results were presented and discussed during Steering Committee meetings.

No mid-term review was scheduled and the project therefore had no real strategy adjustment opportunities that could have avoided engaging in some dead ends (training centre, RILSIM ...)

The third meeting of the Steering Committee recommended the establishment of monitoring and evaluation tool based on indicators of successful achievements, but this recommendation was not implemented. Furthermore, this tool should have also been developed from the start of the project.

Role of the Steering Committee

This Committee, generally, was more was more of **a facility to update stakeholders on current project progress and results than a forum for discussion and debate that could have helped redirect the project strategy** and assess the relevance of some [choice/decisions].

Several recommendations were not properly addressed: mid-term evaluation (PSC2) and final evaluation (PSC3), monitoring and evaluation mission (PSC2), inclusion of more donors in PSC membership (PSC1) study to secure project sustainability (PSC1), and the Committee subsequently failed to stress the importance of these recommendations.

Communication

Among the extremely positive achievements of this project, the following can be highlighted :

- **The development of a website** for the dissemination of information on the project -- a tool that has not been used optimally, in particular regarding the dissemination project results.

- **excellent relations maintained by project staff with the** various project partners, which strongly contributed to the recognition of the project as stakeholder in the sector
- **A substantial body of project monitoring documents** issued.

However, there were communication break-downs at the upper tier between implementing agencies and the Government administration.

Project efficiency

The very high standard of training courses provided, workshops organized, presentations delivered has been acknowledged and all have directly contributed to in the awareness of the importance of EFI, although the concept of sustainability has not achieved the existing expectations and despite the numerous difficulties encountered.

However project results have failed to meet the required scientific standard, especially in the comparison between conventional logging and RIL from the technical and economic perspectives.

Lessons learned

- 1) Two conditions for a project to be successful **is for its design and development to be sufficiently clear** and a strong match between objectives and resources;
- 2) **RIL Training expectations are high** both with logging companies and for the more academic-oriented courses in all countries of the region;
- 3) **There were strong expectations regarding the comparison between the RIL and conventional logging methods** and have not been met because the comparative analyses were too succinct;
- 4) To apply RIL principles to logging companies which are not engaged in a more comprehensive forest management process usually results **in a lack of ownership of the techniques** provided;
- 5) **While controlled logging is a sound entry point to encourage foresters to improve their practices** the range of training available must be rapidly increased to address all RIL aspects;
- 6) **Awareness and advocacy campaigns targeting ENEF students on RIL and RIL curriculum development** by ENEF were successes that still need to be confirmed;
- 7) **The discussion on the feasibility of the training centre attached to the forest pilot should have been more** thorough. Patterns derived from experiences in other parts of the world cannot be applied wholesale;
- 8) **This discussion should also have been more in-depth concerning logging machinery imports procedures;**
- 9) **Similarly, clear procedures on the steps required for any customs clearance** must be established and agreed at project development stage;
- 10) Support from the donor organization – ITTO – and the main implementing agency must help solve some problems faster;
- 11) **The Steering Committee should include more field-level representatives of private companies** and must play a greater role in guiding the project strategy;
- 12) **The very ambitious, regional scope of project** mobilized energies that could have better concentrated on more training activities in Gabon;
- 13) **The project must be more transparent to its partners and avoid blurring the picture of the institutional set-up by assigning** responsibilities for the project to one entity while delegating project operations to another;

- 14) The implementation of the project at field-level has been appraised very positively by all partners;
- 15) Despite **the difficulties and delays, the project was able to progress towards most of its objectives**. These objectives must be seen in the long term and a two-year implementation period is often too short;
- 16) A **monitoring and evaluation system for the project with reliable and realistic indicators** would be necessary to more objectively assess results and impacts;
- 17) **A final evaluation of the project would have been necessary**;
- 18) **The communication must receive constant** attention. It is important that the final documents be widely disseminated.
- 19) **All in-kind contributions from stakeholders** should be quantified from the start of the project and be monitored during its development.

Recommendations for a Phase II project

The project addresses clear expectations and definitively has a role to play in the SFM institutional set-up of Gabon. It actively contributed to raise the awareness of the importance of RIL in the private sector and training institutions in Gabon.

To better take into account the lessons drawn from this phase in the development of a possible second phase project, the mission recommends the following:

1) To focus the objectives of the project on the training component itself:

Within ENEF for curricula under development

For the training of trainers through providing international and national expertise,
To ensure the continuation and expansion of RIL training with logging companies who have already an understanding of the issues at stake.
Funding for training programmes in tree felling techniques, already fully recognized, should shift to other RIL aspects (forest roads and skidding trails, safety of logging practices, etc..).

2) To use the pilot forest for ENEF training, as a tool for demonstrating RIL techniques. The Training Centre will serve as home base for a small number of students. Funding of these trips should be considered and the required equipment and logistics should be adapted;

3) To impose logging companies the commitment to respond to assessments, which are necessary elements for continuous improvement;

4) To further analyse the benefits of RIL relative to the conventional logging both on the training forest and with the logging companies that have information on this subject;

5) To produce a document a clear statement of the benefits of RIL in relation to conventional logging;

6) To regularly update partners, particularly the relevant Government departments;

7) To carry out a feasibility study prior to this second phase, to identify the major players that could become stakeholders and the operation and objectives and design a clear organizational set-up for the project;

8) To set goals that are not overly ambitious in relation to resources used and authorized by the donor;

9) To have local experts trained during the first project phase more strongly involved by promoting an international ad hoc technical support, rather than spreading this support over time;

- 10) To provide support for the project through regular and clearly identified monitoring missions** and to develop a monitoring and evaluation system;
- 11) To define a precise and detailed logical framework** with indicators and verifiers appropriate to the listed activities, from the start of the project;
- 12) To ensure an active role for the Project Steering Committee** when assessing the need for an evaluation and revision of the project strategy, and expand the membership of the **PSC**;
- 13) To ensure that contributions in kind are quantifiable, quantified and effective**;
- 14) To ensure the mainstreaming of project achievements by the country** through an external organization independent from the various stakeholders;
- 15) To conduct an ex-post project evaluation mission** soon after the completion of the project;
- 16) To provide for a project closing meeting** and ensure there are no remaining misunderstanding among project partners regarding project results.

Extraits from the Terms of reference of the mission

II. Purpose and scope of evaluation

A) Purpose

The main purpose of the evaluation is to produce a concise diagnosis of the above project after its completion with an emphasis on stakeholder participation, showing the positive and negative results of the project, highlighting the aspects that explain the successes and failures, and the project's contribution to the ITTO Objective 2000 and the ITTO Action Plan, before drawing any lessons that can be used to improve similar projects in the future.

B) Scope of works

a) To analyse and evaluate the project

1. The role and contribution of the project in the light of sectoral policies, development programmes and priorities and requirements for the sustainable management of forest resources in the country.
2. The state of the current management of forest concessions in the area impacted by the project, the effectiveness of the implementation of the project and its efficiency in promoting sustainable forest management, in accordance with the Criteria and Indicators ITTO for the sustainable management of natural tropical forests.
3. The contributions of specific studies prepared by the project in various disciplines (ecology, socio-economic studies, forestry, etc..) towards the development of forestry in the area of influence of the project.
4. The results and potential impact of applied research conducted by the project on how the promotion and implementation of reduced-impact logging techniques are to be conducted, and the contribution of this research to the body of knowledge relating to forestry in Gabon and the Congo Basin countries.
5. The level of dissemination of project results.
6. The overall post-project situation in the area influenced by the project.
7. The unexpected impacts and implications, both adverse or beneficial, and the reasons for their occurrences.
8. The cost-effectiveness ratio of the implementation of the project including in the technical, financial and management aspects.
9. Follow-up actions to enable greater ownership of project results.

10. The relative success or failure of the project including a summary of key lessons learned and identification of any issues or problems that should be considered in the design and implementation of similar projects in the future.

b) To develop a synthesis designed to enable

1. The overall assessment of the role and degree of project contribution to the implementation of sustainable management of forest resources in tropical timber producing countries in the context of the objectives of the ITTO Action Plans and ITTO Objective 2000.

2. Assessing the overall contribution of the project for the promotion and application of reduced-impact logging techniques.

3. Assessing the overall impact and relevance of the project implementing agency, collaborating agency, the forest-based sector and beneficiary local communities as well as Gabon and the other countries having an interest for the project of the Congo Basin.

4. The evaluation of the achievement of all project objectives and the degree of overall effectiveness of the project.

5. The estimate of the overall adequacy of costs and the adequacy or otherwise of their distribution, and evaluation of the use made of project resources.

c) Make recommendations relating to:

1. The need for similar projects in the future;

2. All approaches and innovative designs of projects aimed at promoting and applying RIL techniques;

3. The categories of targeted entities, including countries, their governments, organizations, the forestry sector, local communities;

4. The arrangements for project implementation;

5. The monitoring and evaluation practices;

6. All other measures necessary to maintain or increase the desired effect on the sustainable of forest resources management and the 2000 Objective and draw conclusions that can be useful to other ITTO projects.

III. Approach

A) Composition of evaluation team

The evaluation work will be performed by a consultant specialist in reduced-impact logging. The consultant will be responsible for various reports and submitting results at the joint session of the Committees during the 47th session of the Council to be held in La Antigua (Guatemala) in November 2011.

B) Consultations during the evaluation work

He (she) will work closely with ITTO and carry out his/her tasks in close cooperation with all parties concerned. Although consultant should be free to discuss with the authorities concerned of all matters relating to the ex-post evaluation mission, he/she is not allowed to take commitment on behalf of ITTO, it being understood that his/her views and opinions do not reflect and should not be construed as the expression of the Organization's.

C) Activities and reports by the mission team

1. The major work required as part of this evaluation are the following:

2. A literature review of all records relating to the project to be provided by the ITTO and the preparation of a

detailed work schedule on the work proposed in the ToR.

3. Mission in the Republic of Gabon. The consultant will pay a visit the headquarters of the subcontractor who was in charge of the project (FORM International, based in the Netherlands) to continue the desk study of documents and materials related to the project and conduct an evaluation which will be associated with the implementing agency. This mission must also include a field visit in the area of influence of the project to review the field work and evaluate the results and impact of the project, this visit will be involve discussions with project stakeholders project and intended beneficiaries. He (she) will hold a meeting to validate the results of the evaluation with key stakeholders in the project before leaving Gabon.
4. Writing an ex-post evaluation report of the project in English or French, according to the specifications and the list of tasks prescribed in the ITTO Manual for project monitoring, reviewing, reporting and evaluation.
5. Writing an executive summary of all the aforementioned report, referring to the objectives of the ITTA, the ITTO Objective 2000 and ITTO Action Plan, and summarizing the key lessons that have been drawn.
6. The submission of the executive summary will take place at the joint session of the Committees during the 47th Session of the Council (November 2011, La Antigua, Guatemala).
7. Writing an article for possible publication in the ITTO Newsletter *Tropical Forest Update* (TFU), in consultation with the editor; this article will present the project in broad terms by summarizing its lessons as identified by the evaluation work. In illustration of this article, high resolution photographs should be provided.
8. High-resolution photographs illustrating the project must be provided to the ITTO Secretariat. As it various reports, the consultant will have the opportunity to discuss its results, preliminary conclusions and recommendations with proposed representatives of the executing agency, the Government of Gabon and ITTO before submitting the final reports. The consultant nevertheless retains final responsibility for the content of the reports.

IV. Duration of the mission

The duration of the mission will be one (1) month including about one-week duty travels within Gabon, the remaining time must be devoted to the preparation of the evaluation mission, to writing and submitting report the ex-post evaluation report to the 47th Session of the Council.

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