

This case study is one of several produced by the **CLARA** network to coincide with the publication of the IPCC Special Report on Land. We're showcasing **CLARA** member climate solutions which demonstrate the **rights-based, low-emission development pathways** needed for reducing emissions while **promoting livelihoods** and **ecosystem integrity**.

# Healthy Forests and Resilient Communities in the Congo

Four organisations working with local communities and governments are taking action to promote equitable community forestry

## Organisations and individuals involved

Fern (Brussels and UK) and their partner Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme (OCDH) in Congo.

Centre pour l'Information Environnementale et le Développement Durable (CIEDD) in Central African Republic and (Centre pour l'Environnement et de Développement) (CED) in Cameroon.

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## Location

Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Central African Republic



**EMPOWERING LOCAL AND INDIGENOUS** communities in the Congo Basin to take over forest management has the potential to restore natural forests, conserve biodiversity, combat illegal logging, address climate change and secure sustainable livelihoods.

Fern is working with Centre pour l'Environnement et de Développement (CED) in Cameroon, Centre pour l'Information Environnementale et le Développement Durable (CIEDD) in Central African Republic and Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme (OCDH) in the Republic of Congo as part of a DFID-funded CoNGOs (NGOs collaborating for equitable and sustainable community livelihoods in the Congo Basin forests) project. This project aims to raise awareness, to trial pilot projects, and to create a favourable environment for community forestry.

Creating effective, equitable, sustainable and genuinely community-based management of resources requires an informed and participatory approach to addressing the constraints that communities face. Through scoping studies, policy dialogues, awareness raising and pilot field projects, Fern,

CED, CIEDD and OCDH have gained understanding of viable options which empower communities directly. We have contributed to the Brazzaville roadmap, a regional policy document for implementing participatory forestry in the Congo Basin, and put community forestry on the agenda of The Congo Basin Forest Partnership. We have promoted community forestry as a mitigation measure linked to the Nationally Determined Contributions, and agreed on a national roadmap for community forestry, including agreement for pilot community forests.

Through community forest management, local communities in the Republic of Congo, Cameroon and CAR will protect land from plantations for palm oil, rubber and cocoa, and mining. Reducing the amount of land taken up by these extractive industries will reduce emissions associated with global production chains.

Community forestry enables communities to exercise their land rights, whilst local economies are invigorated by income from sustainably-harvested forest products. Community forestry and good governance also provide roles for women where previously men were the main or only breadwinners.

## Testimony

### Philomène Biya, civil society platform GDRNE

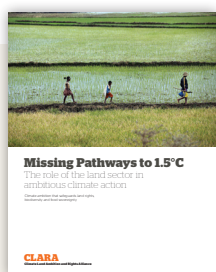
“In the Central African Republic, indigenous communities have lived near and inside forests for decades without destroying them. It is essential to hear what they have to say, particularly women, and involve them in the management and preservation of these forests—using mechanisms such as the Voluntary Partnership Agreement CAR signed with the EU.”

### Marie-Ange Kalenga, Campaigner, Fern

“Forests and people in the Congo Basin are intrinsically linked; protecting the latter means defending the former. Those who depend closely on forests to survive should not be kicked out of forests. Quite the contrary, they should be at the forefront of efforts to save them through equitable community forestry for instance. Only then can the global promise of saving forests and tackling climate change be fulfilled.”

## ‘Missing Pathways’ to climate action

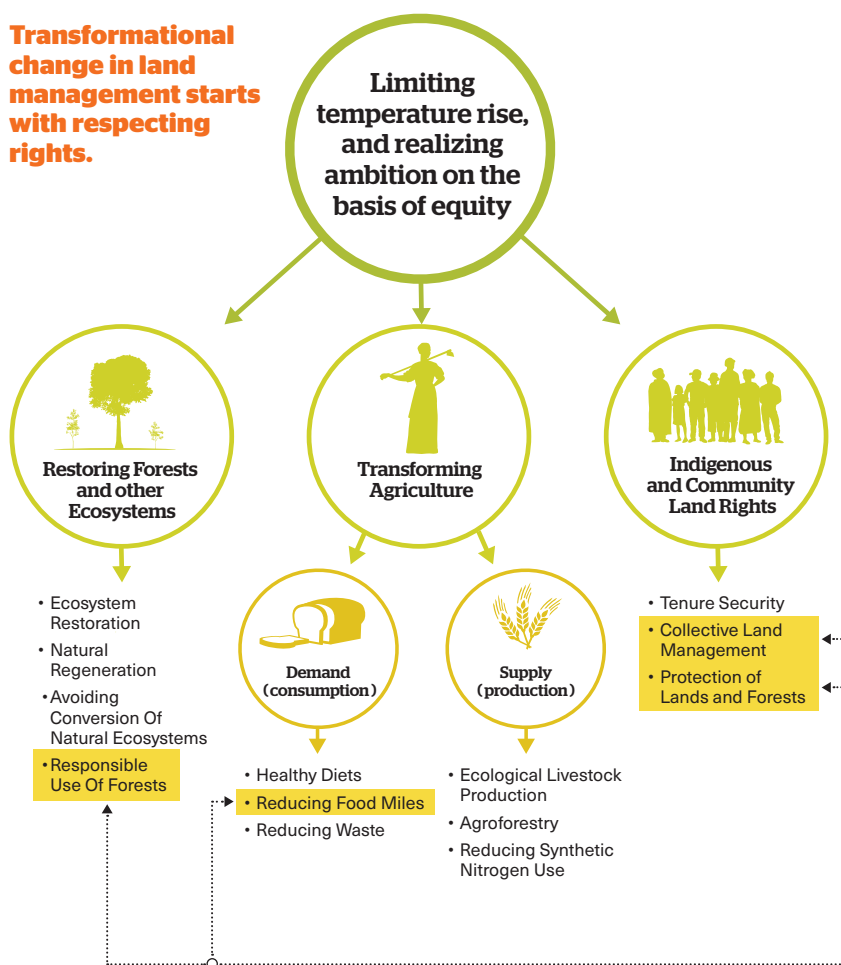
Last year, CLARA published the report ‘Missing Pathways’, identifying areas of global mitigation ambition rooted in land rights, restoration, agroecology, and food system change.



### This example follows ‘Missing Pathways’ to climate action by...

Ensuring effective community forestry which truly puts communities’ rights and livelihoods and the health of native biodiversity first. Secure communities, equipped with good evidence about their options, can claim their rights and participate in strengthening and sustaining their livelihoods, while protecting forests. Protecting forests goes hand in hand with increased climate resilience. With increasingly large areas of land under community forestry, soils are held in place (they are not washed away by rains as they would be in plantations), and more food can be produced. Restoration and protection of forests also leads to sustained and in many cases increased natural carbon sinks.

Transformational change in land management starts with respecting rights.



Community forest projects prioritise local-level economies over international production chains, thus **reducing food miles**, whilst encouraging **responsible use of forests** and **protection of lands and forests** through **collective land management**.

### Contact CLARA

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