



«Efficiency in coordination, mobilization, discussions and communication»

Minutes of the thematic day on gender of March 18, 2013

The opening session of the gender thematic day that held as a prelude to the 12th Partners Meeting of PFBC, punctuated by opening remarks from the facilitator of the day, was generally aimed at contributing to the integration of gender mainstreaming within COMIFAC. The priorities include

- Developing a common vision on gender mainstreaming for COMIFAC,
- Sensitizing technical and financial partners on the importance of gender mainstreaming, of placing Equality between Women and Men at the center of their intervention strategy and identifying success factors,
- Contributing to the development of a gender strategy for COMIFAC.

This was followed by a word from the representative of the consortium of former facilitators. She underscored the fact that gender issues will be one of the foreign policy priorities of the United States of America. She gave an outline of the strategy that will be applied in capacity building and leadership of women on one hand, and on the representation of women in decision-making bodies. This strategy will ensure the involvement of women in the natural resource conservation programme.

Following this presentation, the Executive Secretary of COMIFAC proceeded to open the theme day's discussions. He welcomed and thanked the participants for their massive attendance. He then gave a presentation on the history of gender mainstreaming within COMIFAC. Finally, he expressed the wish to see the proceedings result in useful guidelines that should enable COMIFAC to develop a common vision and lead to the development of its gender strategy. On this note, he declared the working session open.

➤ **Introductory session**

This session that examined the achievements of COMIFAC with regard to gender mainstreaming, dwelled on gender mainstreaming within programs and projects which rely on the appropriateness of the human rights approach and which is an economic asset.

Subsequently, a debate was held on this session. Discussions were basically focused on the importance of capacity building, sensitization within COMIFAC Member States and representation of women within decision-making bodies.

➤ **Session II**

A round table conference was organized on the innovative results and lessons learnt from actual experiences on national, regional and international fronts: model forests, valorization of Non-timber forest products (PFNL) by REFADD (the Network of African Women for Sustainable Development) Rwanda and REFADD Cameroun, gender mainstreaming within ONU-REDD, and the MRV project which is a COMIFAC project implemented by FAO.

This was followed by discussions that focused on the valorization and labeling of Non-timber forest products, the importance of capitalizing on various discussions that took place during previous workshops and the importance accorded to land tenure.

➤ **Session III**

The theme of this session focused on the gender strategy of partners. GIZ made a presentation on perspectives of gender mainstreaming within COMIFAC while laying emphasis on the importance of synergy with other partners. The second presentation dwelled on initial reflection elements in order to develop a gender strategy for COMIFAC. It was notably focused on the issues discussed during the one to one meetings at the workshop with the ad-hoc committee, the Executive Secretary of COMIFAC and its experts and partners.

This was then followed by group work. Four groups were set up and worked on two lines of work proposed in view of drawing up a draft gender strategy. The first line of work focused on the conducive environment and a common vision while the second line of work focused

on a gender-responsive programming. This was followed by a debate on recommendations per workshop.

Globally, the initial proposals of the draft gender strategy were validated by participants. Further suggestions emerged from the presentations and discussions namely:

1/ Transformation of CAG into a permanent gender commission within COMIFAC
Observation: *this issue raised a few objections and participants never reached a consensus. It was rather agreed that a Committee be formed.*

2/ An assessment of both internal and external COMIFAC activities.

3/ Due to the long history of female marginalization, a positive discrimination policy would foster the improvement of women's conditions, (to achieve equity) and once equilibrium is attained, implement the principle of equality.

4/ Increasingly strengthen the gender mainstreaming principles and mechanisms in the laws and regulations of countries concerned.

5/ Take the national approach into consideration in CAG activities.

6/ Diversify means of communication

7/ CBFP should contribute to the mobilization of financial resources to implement the gender strategy of COMIFAC.

8/ Take men and women into consideration when organizing gender capacity building sessions.

Furthermore, experiences from the round table conference revealed success factors that can improve the efficiency of the gender strategy within COMIFAC. The most important include:

1/ The availability of gender-specific data and sharing of information to all partners at all levels of intervention.

2/ Closer collaboration of COMIFAC with other networks and forums working on gender-related problems in the management of forest resources

3/ Revising the mandate and mission of CAG.

4/ Building the capacities of stakeholders as part of the gender mainstreaming strategy

5/ Availability of financial resources

6/ The political will of decision-makers

7/ The need to set criteria ahead of schedule, clear outcomes and performance indicators with regard to Male – Female equality as concerns stimulating development.

8/ The need to sustainably support female income generating activities so that they can transfer from consumption-based economy to a market economy

The working session ended at 18.02.