Civil Society Strengthening Report
Réseau pour la Conservation et la Réhabilitation des Ecosystèmes Forestiers

*Final report MFS II evaluation*

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Inhoud
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1. Introduction
This report is part of a larger evaluation of the Netherlands development programme MFS II. MFS II is the 2011-2015 grant framework of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Dutch NGOs, which is directed at achieving a sustainable reduction in poverty. A total of 20 consortia of Dutch NGOs have been awarded €1.9 billion in MFS II grants. MFS II-funded organisations support a wide range of development activities of a large number of southern partner organisations in over 70 countries. This report is part of the country study carried out in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The overall report consists of three parts, based on three categories of priority result areas: achievement of MDGs & themes, capacity development of Southern Partner Organisations (SPOs), and civil society strengthening. This report focuses on the civil society strengthening component.

As part of the civil society strengthening component of the evaluation, we looked at ways in which development projects have strengthened civil society. The evaluation aims to analyse changes that have taken place in civil society during the evaluation period and the extent to which development interventions with Dutch MFS II financing have contributed to these changes. The evaluation consists of a baseline and endline study and focuses on a broad sample of 19 partnerships. We conducted observations, workshops, field visits and interviews, during three visits in 2012, 2013 (smaller subsample) and 2014. At the beginning of 2015, we organised a feedback workshop in DRC for all organisations in the capacity development and civil society strengthening parts of the evaluation, where we discussed the general findings and received comments on the draft version of this report.¹ Core elements of our evaluation approach are the Theory of Change and the Civicus Civil Society Index², which distinguishes five dimensions to civil society: Civic engagement, Level of organisation, Practice of values, Perception of impact, and the Environment.

¹ The draft version of this report was commented upon by François Biloko and Floribert Masani (Réseau CREF). We would like to thank them for their comments and additions.
² www.civicus.org; see also CDI, Operational guidelines for Ethiopia, India, and Indonesia, 2012 (internal working document)
In this report we look specifically at the contribution of Réseau pour la Conservation et la Réhabilitation des Ecosystèmes Forestiers (Réseau CREF) to civil society strengthening. Réseau CREF is a partner of IUCN-NL and the Ecosystem Alliance. Réseau CREF is a network of civil society organisations that aim to contribute to the struggle against poverty of local communities that depend on forests, through rational management of forestry ecosystems. For this evaluation we focus on the project with IUCN-NL/Ecosystem Alliance: a two-year, EUR 165,824 project to create participatory eco-development plans in 15 rural Decentralised Territorial Entities in North Kivu. This project had no dedicated civil society strengthening component, but can be considered an integral civil society strengthening project.

Our analysis reveals that at the level of the Decentralised Territorial Entities, the consultation frameworks have become established over the past years. The work of Réseau CREF on participatory planning has resulted in the completion of an eco-development plan for each of the 15 Decentralised Territorial Entities. With the current lack of financing for executing these plans, however, Réseau CREF’s work has yet to prove itself.

In the following, first we describe the country and relevant local context. Then we give a short description of Réseau CREF and the project with the civil society strengthening/policy influencing elements. Next, we shortly discuss the methodology. We then present the results, followed by a discussion and conclusion.

2. Context

In this section, we briefly describe the country and local context as far as it is relevant for the project under evaluation.

North Kivu, and eastern DRC as a whole, is strongly characterised by the legacy of repeated conflict and high levels of insecurity. High levels of poverty are coupled with limited access to basic services, in a still young democracy with a history of clientelism and rent-seeking. Eastern DRC is reputed for high levels of gender-based violence, including sexual violence against women. At the same time, the Kivus have a history of civil society mobilisation, and the eastern DRC has received a great deal of international aid. North Kivu possesses a wealth of natural resources and has a high agricultural potential. The following paragraphs describe these issues in more detail.

Since the mid-1990s, the east of the DRC has gone through several periods of violence. Even though the Sun City agreements in 2002 marked the end of all-out war and integration of important factions in the Congolese national army FARDC, there remained a number of armed groups that chose to retain arms for a variety of reasons. With the presence of the world’s largest peacekeeping mission MONUSCO and a great deal of international aid, the situation seems to be slowly improving. Nevertheless insecurity persists in some areas, and increased during the recent rise and demise of rebel movement M23 (2012-2013). The Fall of Goma in December 2012 and consequent threat to Bukavu led to the evacuation of the majority of international staff, and drew the attention of the military to North Kivu, with armed groups in other parts taking advantage of the situation (*the FDLR

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1 See the insightful maps of armed groups in the East by Christoph Vogel, and the analyses by the Rift Valley Institute
came out of the forests\(^4\)). The following defeat of M23 and military moves against other armed groups have led to more optimism, though.

The rise and demise of M23 and ensuing tensions with neighbouring Rwanda have strongly influenced the security situation in North Kivu during the evaluation period. Many people are concerned about the security situation and lack trust in the police and the military. In South Kivu, we heard many examples of people that were accused of witchcraft, as well as the practice of Kabanga (in which people are killed with a cord so that the cord gets magical powers). A relatively new trend is the phenomenon of popular justice; dissatisfied with the state of impunity, the absence of the state, and delays of the justice sector, people are increasingly resorting to their own means of justice (often lynching the alleged perpetrators). There is a widespread feeling among the poor that state justice is only for the wealthy: "If you’re rich, you don’t go to prison".

The decades of insecurity, conflict, and the rent-seeking dictatorship of Mobutu have greatly impoverished the DRC. The country has great potential for agriculture and possesses a wealth of mineral resources. The potential of all these resources however is far from being exploited. On the 2014 Human Development Index, DRC ranked 186 out of 187 (followed only by Niger). Gross national income per head was noted to be at $444 in 2013, which was lowest of all countries for which data were available. In the same year, 87.7% of the population lived below the poverty line of $1.25 a day.\(^5\) The majority of the rural population depends on agriculture for making a living. Due to the repeated conflict, the three cities in North Kivu have grown quickly over the last two decades, increasing pressure on the natural resources in the surrounding areas.

Access to natural resources is one of the hot issues in North Kivu, as during the different rebellions, actors controlling the province have been engaged in mineral exploitation in order to sustain their movements and to pay back countries that were said to support them militarily. Access to natural resources refers here not only to mining, but also to oil exploitation, particularly in the Virunga Park, which is located nearby Rwanda and Uganda. These actors include both internally supported rebellion movements and externally led movements, each of them trying to get maximum of what it can from the same resources. As Réseau CREF aims at protecting the environment, it is not easy to accomplish its mission without competition and even confrontation with these other actors operating on the ground.

Civil society in the Kivus is relatively well-developed. In years preceding this evaluation, organisations in North Kivu have started to join forces on certain themes in platforms, and to meet each other in thematic groups under the Bureau de Coordination de la Societe Civile, which is very active in speaking out against the government. At the same time, civil society is challenged in terms of fragmentation and weak governance. There is also a strong presence of international organisations willing to partner with local NGOs. After many years of a strong humanitarian presence, many organisations are now starting to engage in development aid. However, a side-effect of the long-time presence of humanitarian aid is an attitude of dependency among parts of the population, which people describe as *attentisme* (wait and see). This is a challenge for organisations attempting to set up development projects, as their beneficiaries are used to free distribution of materials, and changing this attitude is not a short-term process.

\(^4\) RFDP workshop end line

The dependency of civil society on foreign aid is high, and almost complete. NGOs derive their funding almost exclusively from foreign funding. Their own initiatives are indirectly derived from this funding, which does allow them a certain institutional leeway. Local grassroots associations are not directly funded, but depend for their operations, seminars, transport and accompaniment on funded NGOs. For the near future, the continuation of the women’s movement requires that the international community continues to recognise and support the role of NGOs in promoting women’s rights.

The political context in North Kivu is similar to the context in the rest of the country: decades of bad governance cannot be easily erased, and the country is only recently learning to ‘do’ democracy. Politicians are learning to be accountable, instead of using their position for personal enrichment. During the evaluation period, many activities were being undertaken in North Kivu to prepare for the decentralisation that will come with the local elections now scheduled for August 2015. 6 Decentralisation was part of the Constitution adopted in 2006, and the decision to put in place a more decentralised system of governance was taken 5 years ago.7 Nevertheless, local elections have yet to be held. At the level of the local ‘decentralised territorial entities’ (entité territorial decentralisé, or ETD), which corresponds with the level of the territories in North and South Kivu, many organisations have moved ahead to engage in promoting participatory planning processes, each with their specific issues in mind. Local elections are considered an opportunity for people to gain experience with the political process and public management. Women’s organisations view these elections as a strategic moment for increasing women’s participation at the decision-making level. Strikingly, however, few of the territorial development plans (if any) appear to have been funded so far.

3. Description of Southern Partner Organisation
In this section we briefly describe Réseau CREF: its history, organisational details, main approach and areas of intervention.

Réseau pour la Conservation et la Réhabilitation des Ecosystèmes Forestiers (Réseau CREF), Network for the Conservation and Rehabilitation of Forestry Ecosystems, was created in May 2003. It aims to contribute to the struggle against poverty of local communities that depend on forests, through rational management of forestry ecosystems. Réseau CREF is a framework for consultation, lobby and advocacy, aiming to strengthen the capacity of its members in conservation and rehabilitation of forestry ecosystems in DRC.

At its beginning, Réseau CREF consisted of 21 member organisations. This number grew to 28 at the baseline visit of the evaluation, and has since has grown to 29. The organisational structure consists of a General Assembly of representatives of member organisations, the Board of Directors, the Audit Committee and the Secretariat (the executive part of the network). Starting with 2 staff in the executive, Réseau CREF nowadays employs 12 staff. There have been no major changes in staff during

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6 For more information about the calendar and the latest news about electoral preparations, see the webpage of the national election commission: http://www.ceni.gouv.cd/
7 For more information, see: Cellule Technique d’Appui à la décentralisation, 2010. La décentralisation au service de la paix, de la démocratie, du développement et de l’unité nationale.
the evaluation period, except for the resignation of the former Administrative and Financial Director. She was replaced on December 1st, 2013.

Member organisations are present in all of the 6 territoires of North Kivu and the 3 major cities Goma, Butembo and Beni. Members differ in terms of organisational capacity. Member organisations are also organised in territorial synergies, which organise conseils de concertation territorial, or CCTs, twice a year. The CCTs’ aim is to bring together all stakeholders in natural resource management at the level of the territory or city.

As can be seen in table 1, Réseau CREF partners with a number of international organisations. IUCN-NL is among main donors of the Réseau CREF and has been supporting the Network since the beginning. At the same time, Réseau CREF has received significant funding from several other donors, such as RFN for the annual operation plan and community forestry, and FPP for the REDD+ and human rights.

**Table 1: overview of Réseau CREF funding from 2011 through 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Donor</th>
<th>Major Objective</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Amount of funding in Euros</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Synergie multi-acteurs gestion écosystèmes</td>
<td>UICN NL (MFS)</td>
<td>Gestion durable des écosystèmes par les entités rurales</td>
<td>01.10.2012 - 30.09.2014</td>
<td>81.938,00 - 76.437,00 - 7.449,00 - 165.824,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gouvernance transfrontalière des RRN</td>
<td>UICN NL (non-MFS)</td>
<td>Habiliter les communautés locales à influencer les organismes publics et régionaux à respecter leurs besoins et leurs droits humains, sociaux, économiques et environnementaux.</td>
<td>01.01.2013 - 31.12.2015</td>
<td>296.395,00 - 211.156,00 - 507.551,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renforcement sécurité des acteurs</td>
<td>UICN NL (non-MFS)</td>
<td>Réduire la vulnérabilité des acteurs de la Société Civile</td>
<td>15.07.2014 - 31.08.2014</td>
<td>12.963,00 - 12.963,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan opérationnel annuel</td>
<td>RFN</td>
<td>Protection des forêts et Droits de communautés</td>
<td>yearly</td>
<td>360.000,00 - 280.633,92 - 288.000,00 - 321.273,00 - 1.249.906,92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foresterie communautaire</td>
<td>RFN</td>
<td>Sécurisation foncière, gestion biodiversité,</td>
<td>01.05.2014 - 01.05.2015</td>
<td>68.265,00 - 68.265,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REDD et Droits humains</td>
<td>FPi</td>
<td>Réduire la pauvreté et promouvoir les droits de communautés</td>
<td>01.09.2012 - 31.08.2014</td>
<td>80.000,00 - 97.770,00 - 257.770,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gouvernance et transparence forestier</td>
<td>Global Witness</td>
<td>Assurer plus de transparence dans le secteur forestier</td>
<td>01.07.2011 - 31.03.2013</td>
<td>44.395,20 - 8.628,00 - 60.155,20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renforcement de la Société Civile</td>
<td>WWF</td>
<td>Gestion durable des écosystèmes par les entités rurales</td>
<td>01.02.2012 - 30.04.2012</td>
<td>3.360,00 - 3.360,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politique et législation forestières</td>
<td>RRN</td>
<td>Plaidoyer pour les droits des communautés forestières</td>
<td>01.11.2011 - 31.12.2014</td>
<td>18.444,00 - 19.184,00 - 37.628,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Création de 4 forêts communautaire</td>
<td>PPI-UICN Fr</td>
<td>Renforcer le processus de forestier communautaire à Walikale</td>
<td>01.10.2011 - 31.12.2013</td>
<td>20.000,00 - 12.000,00 - 32.000,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic sur les flux du bois</td>
<td>CIFOR</td>
<td>Améliorer le secteur de l’exploitation artisanale du bois</td>
<td>01.03.2012 - 31.03.2013</td>
<td>43.539,20 - 43.539,20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensibilisation sur la REDD+ et le CLIP</td>
<td>SSSNC</td>
<td>Faire connaître le processus REDD et le CLIP à la base</td>
<td>01.10.2012 - 31.12.2012</td>
<td>34.400,00 - 34.400,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forerstière communautaire</td>
<td>SYNCHRONICITY</td>
<td>Implanter la forestiére communautaire à Beni-Lubero</td>
<td>01.03.2013 - 01.07.2013</td>
<td>12.800,00 - 12.800,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appui institutionnel</td>
<td>SYNCHRONICITY</td>
<td>Contribuer à l’amélioration de la gouvernance forestière</td>
<td>01.05.2013 - 30.06.2013</td>
<td>12.800,00 - 12.800,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stude sur le bois scie</td>
<td>KEFRI</td>
<td>Documenter la situation au Nord-Kivu</td>
<td>01.09.2013 - 01.02.2014</td>
<td>1.222,40 - 1.833,60 - 3.056,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total amount of funding 2011-2014: 405.576,00 554.848,72 823.468,40 759.923,60 1.901.017,92

Percentage MPS: 0,00% 14,77% 9,28% 0,98% 8,72%

8 Overview made by the Secretary General of Réseau CREF, October 2014.
Brief Theory of Change

The five-year goal of Réseau CREF is to improve the well-being of the local community and autochthonous peoples through good governance of natural resources and the promotion of the green economy. Conditions identified by Réseau CREF are primarily of a legal nature, but also have to do with the capacity of the member organisations. In terms of the law, two important conditions are the addition of missing elements to the legal texts on natural resources, as well as the harmonisation of different legal texts with respect to natural resources. For this to come about, it is important to set up a lobby for the completion and harmonisation of these texts, and to strengthen CCTs and synergies in the territories and the cities. Additionally, the capacity of autochthonous peoples should be reinforced, in terms of knowing their rights and duties. In order to facilitate these processes, the capacity of the member organisations of the Network should be strengthened. Another important condition is the effective decentralisation of governance. Existing measures or legal texts that deal with natural resources need to be applied, and the lobby for strict application of the law needs to be strengthened. Réseau CREF sees its main role in setting up lobby and advocacy at the provincial level, and institutionally supporting its members in their accompaniment of grassroots populations.

4. Project description: civil society/policy advocacy elements

Here we describe the project and its civil society/policy advocacy elements, in terms of size, budget, duration, major objectives and activities.

The relationship between Réseau CREF and IUCN-NL dates back to 2002, when IUCN-NL financed a project which led to the creation of Réseau CREF in 2003. Formal cooperation between Réseau CREF and IUCN-NL began in 2004. During the evaluation period, IUCN-NL funded one project using MFS II financing: ‘Synergie multi-acteurs gestion écosystèmes’ (multi-actor synergy for ecosystem management), which ran from October 2012 to September 2014. It is this project which we will focus on for this evaluation.

According to the project proposal, the project with IUCN-NL focused on the creation of eco-development plans for 15 ETDs (out of the total of 20 ETDs in the Province, 17 chiefdoms and the 3 cities). This project focuses specifically on rural chiefdoms and sectors, in which there are different types of ecosystems such as forests, national parks and lakes. The rationale behind the project is that there is more and more environmental degradation in these ETDs, because of irrational exploitation of resources and weak governance. In this respect, Réseau CREF’s aims were:

(i) promoting local governance of local natural resources;
(ii) promoting local community development; and
(iii) engage in anti-poverty actions.

With these objectives, ETDs were expected to be involved in decision making and processes regarding the management of their local and natural resources. In order to achieve these objectives, project activities were planned along the lines of the objectives:

9 For a more extensive description of the Theory of Change of RECIC, see the Annex.
(i) Promote local development of ETDs through participatory management of natural resources (organize a methodological meeting in order to harmonize views between Réseau CREF and the provincial government, organize workshops in Goma and Beni for launching the participatory planning processes, etc.)

(ii) Reinforce competencies and technical, institutional and relational capacities of civil society organisations on eco-development in the DRC (train ETD stakeholders on eco-development, hold preliminary diagnoses of 27 NGOs and CBOs in terms of 3 per ETD, etc.)

(iii) Improve approaches and tools of actors involved in the project process in North Kivu (follow up and advise organisations involved, organise meetings for the members of the synergies involved, hold a sensitisation and exchange of experience workshop on oil exploration and exploitation in North Kivu, monitor lobbying activities)

So the civil society impact lies at three levels:

Firstly, at the ETD level, Réseau CREF accompanied communities to create the eco-development plans, bringing together citizens, traditional leaders, CBO and NGOs representatives.

Secondly, at the provincial level, it was planned that the network (as the provincial platform) would push social mobilization of different stakeholders on participatory and rational management of ecosystems in North Kivu so that communities can benefit from them. This has been taking place through the CCT meetings held in all territories and cities targeted by the project.

Thirdly, at the level of the Network, the executive office of the Network was involved in supervising its member organisations in the implementation of the project, as well as strengthening their organisational capacity.

5. Data collection and analytical approach

Here we describe the baseline and follow-up assessment, as well as particular choices and data collection problems. We also explain here which outcomes were selected for the contribution analysis. The general methodology we followed can be found in as an Annex, as well as a list of documents employed, workshop participants and other informants. A draft version of this report was discussed with staff of Réseau CREF during a feedback workshop in DRC at the beginning of 2015.

Generally, we followed the methodology described in the Annex. The endline workshop was conducted by Patrick Milabyo, who was also involved in the baseline visit, and it involved a number of the same people as the baseline workshop, and involved a field visit to Nyiragongo Territory.

As described in our methodology, we decided to conduct a contribution analysis for a subsample. Réseau CREF was not included in this subsample.

6. Results

In this section, we describe our findings. We provide descriptive analyses and scoring of relative changes in the CSI dimensions (Civic engagement, Level of organisation, Practice of values, Perception of impact, and the Environment).
### Civic Engagement

*Under this dimension we distinguish the diversity of socially-based engagement (taking into account needs of marginalised groups, participation of target groups in the project), and the diversity of political engagement (is there dialogue of local leaders in dialogue with government representatives, are beneficiaries member of sectoral user groups).*

The Network has a special focus on marginalized groups, in the form of autochthonous peoples (*les pygmées*). Since 2012, the dialogue between chiefs who control land and autochthonous peoples has improved to the extent that some of them have acquired pieces of land in the Beni and Nyiragongo territories. In the project under evaluation, the prime beneficiaries are impoverished rural communities. Staff and member organisations generally feel the needs of beneficiaries are taken into account, though obviously the needs always surpass the available means. Beneficiaries are usually consulted by the member organisations in order to identify problems and proposed solutions. Setting up the eco-development plan for each ETD is seen by the staff as a way to foster participation of the target group in local governance processes.

At the level of the ETDs, the project has strengthened the partnership between civil society actors and local communities. The processes of developing the eco-development plans created a space in which residents and their leaders discussed about environmental issues of the area and how people can better benefit from the environmental resources. In addition, Réseau CREF member organisations organise 6-monthly meetings in each ETD, the *Conseil de Concertation Territorial* (CCT), in which they invite representatives of local authorities (political, administrative, and customary authorities), CSOs and the private sector. Nevertheless, as the process of decentralisation has yet to be completed, it remains to be seen how these local development plans will be put into practice, and how a transparent and accountable relationship will develop between the local population and the local government.

Overall, during the evaluation period Réseau CREF has maintained its level of engagement for this dimension, notwithstanding the disruption by the M23 rebellion. The project funded by IUCN-NL has played a role in this.

### Level of Organisation

*This dimension focuses on the organisational level of civil society (the connectedness of SPOs in networks of organisations, the nature of relationships between SPOs and networks, and the degree of representation of interests); peer to peer communication (the strength of the relationships of the SPOs).*
with other actors); and financial and human resources (the composition of the financial resource base, availability of human resources).

The Network is, by its nature, in close relations with organisations working on the theme of natural resources. Additionally, it has been leading the environmental thematic group of the Civil Society Bureau in Goma during the evaluation period, and its member organisations also organise the CCTs in the territories and cities, which bring together all kinds of CSOs. The president of the Network is also President of the Civil Society Bureau of North Kivu. Réseau CREF has more than 4 meetings per year with its 29 member organisations. This has enabled the Network to strengthen relations of synergy among actors and to mobilise resources through a common strategic plan. With organisations that are not member, there is some collaboration, mostly when organisations share the same target group.

Réseau CREF also has dialogue with its national and international partners (such as RFN, RRN, CREDDHO, IUCN-NL, FPP, Global Witness, WWF, etc.) between 2 to 3 times a year. It is a member of the global IUCN network. Réseau CREF benefits from technical support from Well Grounded. It meets regularly with the Provincial Ministry of Environment on diverse issues and is part of the sectoral committee ‘environmental protection and climate change’.

In terms of finances, the Network receives funding from many international donors, of whom one covers 75% of the institutional costs (RFN, which has covered about 65% of the total budget in the evaluation period). This means Réseau CREF is strongly dependent on international donors, but the diversity of donors also shows the Network is able to mobilise and manage resources, and maintain partnerships. The Network has acquired its own property, including its own plot in Goma and the office building. According to the staff, Réseau CREF is in the phase of developing a business plan in order to generate income locally. Member organisations are yearly required to contribute 120 USD, for the organisation of meetings for the internal organisational structure, such as the Board and the Audit Committee of the Network. Because the Network has been relatively successful in getting access to finances in the past years, some member organisations become dependent on the Secretariat for their access to funding.
**Practice of Values**

This dimension deals with internal governance (the functioning of the legally required internal committees, are they involved in the strategic management of the SPO, and the functioning of lower CSO levels), and transparency (respect of internal written procedures, extent of downward accountability, within the SPO and to lower CSO levels, transparency on finances).

As a network organisation, the functioning of the internal organisational structure is of vital importance to Réseau CREF. The member organisations have a say in the day to day affairs of the Network through their participation in the yearly General Assembly, but also through participating in the Board of Directors and Audit Committee. During the evaluation period, the various committees and the GA have continued to operate normally, based on the 2007 statutes. Complications by the security situation in North Kivu were dealt with by several members from more remote parts temporarily delegating their authority to members living in the vicinity of Goma.

The secretariat places strong emphasis on building capacity of the members, which designates member organisations as beneficiaries of the interventions by the secretariat. They are also involved in the planning and execution of activities. This means that in the case of Réseau CREF, beneficiaries are strongly involved in the management of the organisation. However, members of local communities, beneficiaries of member organisations, are not represented: they may find representation in the General Assemblies and Committees of the member organisations, though. Another form of downward accountability for member organisations is through the CCTs, which each organisation is supposed to organise twice a year.

Réseau CREF does an institutional audit every year. Yearly audits for member organisations are also part of the Network code of conduct, with now 90% of the members doing a yearly audit. In case the audit finds irregularities, this may result in expulsion (3 organisations were excluded from the Network during the evaluation period). According to the staff, ‘we have developed a culture of self-evaluation’. This has increased credibility of Réseau CREF among its funding partners.

**Perception of Impact**

Under this dimension we discuss the responsiveness (nature and intensity of SPO’s relationship with the public sector and the private sector); social impact (target group satisfaction regarding fulfilment of their primary social concern, perception of public and private sector of quality of delivery of services by SPO); and the policy impact (the level of influence of SPOs in the process leading to major policy changes identified in the sector of the SPO’s intervention since 2011).

In terms of civil society impact, Réseau CREF’s interventions are directed at various levels. The majority of funding is directed at the grassroots level, through the member organisations. In these interventions, the secretariat depends on the member organization, and thus sometimes is limited by the capacity of the member organisations. During the evaluation period, important results of the work of Réseau CREF are the eco-development plans created in most ETDs, as well as the CCTs that have been organised. Impact is still limited, according to Network staff and members, but there are examples of success: for example, there is more debate on oil exploitation in Virunga National Park, and on sustainable management of forests, communities have become more conscious of the importance of sustainably managing their environment, a spirit of being accountable is developing, and there have been a number of reforestation activities (reboisement).
At higher levels, interventions succeed at drawing government attention to questions of natural resource governance, and the stakes of autochthonous peoples and local communities. The Network is invited to share information, and it is the secretary of the subcommittee ‘environmental protection and climate change’. At national level, through the Réseau Ressources Naturelles (RRN), Réseau CREF has been active in adding elements that lacked to judicial texts on natural resources, for example the National Law on nature conservation (loi sur la conservation de la nature) which was promulgated by the President in February 2014. Similarly, Réseau CREF made propositions to the amend the Loi sur les hydrocarbures, and participated in a workshop in Kisangani to elaborate propositions for the mining code (code minier). At provincial level, Réseau CREF has initiated a provincial law (édit) to be passed at the provincial parliament, related to forestry governance, i.e. management of wood cutting and wood trade, REDD+, CLIP. At the national level, the Réseau CREF has acted through the RRN which is based in Kinshasa.

With the private sector, experiences are more mixed: on one hand, they participate in the CCTs at the level of the ETDs; on the other hand, the interests of the private sector are often very divergent. Impact on private sector policies is still very limited; nevertheless, the SOCO oil company has recently decided to end its operations in Virunga National Park, and Réseau CREF was part of the civil society coalition campaigning against this oil exploitation.

**Environment/context**

*This dimension takes the wider environment into account. What is the degree of participation of the SPO in defining the civil society interventions of the CFA/Consortium; to what extent is a context analysis of the space and role of civil society in the specific country done as part of the programme/project cycle; to what extent is the SPO is involved in studies on civil society?*

Réseau CREF has sufficient access to information on socio-economic development and developments in politics and security, through its embeddedness in North Kivu civil society, but also through the availability of stable internet. It collects data and performs analyses, but this is not done in a regular fashion. Opportunities are explored, in the CCT for instance, and the functioning of the member organisations is evaluated. However, there seems to be no system for doing this regularly, or someone who is in charge of doing this. At the request of the donors, Réseau CREF undertook a self-evaluation of their strategy in 2009, which resulted in a stronger focus on 4 main objectives. For the development of the new strategic plan 2012-1017, the Network also engages in analysis of the context and the opportunities it presents. Threats are common for staff of the Network, and staff have taken precautions such as security rules to follow in the field, in the office and at home.

Réseau CREF is not involved in studies on civil society by its partners. Through its nature as a Network organisation, it has developed a vision on how to develop the capacity of its members, and it is working on contributing to this.

7. **Discussion**

Given our findings, the project ‘Synergie multi-acteurs de gestion participative des écosystèmes au Nord-Kivu en RD’ was reasonably well-designed. It involved local citizens, civil society and the community leaders in the processes of creating eco-development plans, and managed to do this in 15 of 20 ETDs. At the same time, the M23 rebellion affected to some extent the participatory sense of these plans, as in some areas, it was difficult to mobilize many people for the workshops. Additionally, the implementation of the plans and the participatory mechanisms involved depends greatly on the
decentralisation; if local elections are postponed again, as they have been previously, it is highly questionable whether the plans will really be executed. Finances for the plans also have to be secured, as these were not foreseen in the project with IUCN-NL.

We would advise to fund a similar project in the future/or to continue funding this project, provided attention is paid to how to coordinate with other actors operating in the area in order to prevent competition on the processes of creating similar development plans in the same target areas. Also, it would be worth to pay attention to any possibility of getting the plans funded; the ETDs are only able to raise a limited amount of taxes, and without funding these plans, it is difficult to make sure that citizens are participating actively or have a say in better management of their environment. In case the decentralisation proceeds as planned, and is accompanied by the devolution of the necessary budget to the ETDs, the local population will be able to hold their leaders to account in executing the eco-development plans.
8. Conclusion
Here we provide an answer to the two general evaluation questions:

1) **What are the changes in civil society in the 2012-2014 period, with particular focus on the relevant MDGs & themes in the selected country?**

Changes in civil society in the 2012-2014 period can be summarised as follows: (i) people being more and more conscious about the environmental protection need, they can express the ideas about it and can take action. (ii) An alternative language by local communities against resource exploitation such as oil exploitation that affects the environmental protection in the Virunga National Park. (iii) Contribution of Réseau CREF to drafting some texts of law, which are either new or complementary to those that exist. (iv) Sustained interaction between local authorities, CSOs, citizens and the private sector through the CCTs and the eco-development plan processes in the ETDs. To some degree, participatory planning created a space in which residents expressed their needs related to environmental protection and were able to speak to their local leaders in relation to the issue. It is not sure, after the project ends, that awareness raising on sustainable living environment and forests and biodiversity will continue to take place.

2) **What is the relevance of these changes?**

As mentioned under the context description in this report, there are issues that are important to people in the area of environmental protection. Environmental degradation somehow affects people’s livelihoods, the slowly coming decentralisation could decrease the distance between the local government and the local population, and there is a lack of trust between authorities and people, due in turn to a lack of transparency and accountability between those who are leading and those who are led.

These changes are relevant in the sense that they include activities at community, provincial and international levels and they are related to long term changes in the area of environmental protection. Also, they are relevant as they address the important issues mentioned above by raising awareness of local people on their rights and duties and by strengthening capacity of local actors on good governance of local communities in the area of environmental protection.

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being “not at all” and 10 being “completely”, for this project (as in: SPO interventions towards civil society strengthening), we indicate how much we agree with the following statements:

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<td>The project reached all its objectives</td>
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<td>The observed results are relevant to the project beneficiaries</td>
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Documents consulted for the report

*From Réseau CREF*

102324_Reseau_CREF_AE_Full_proposal_Juillet_2012_(2012-2014)
AE 2011-2015 Rapport financier interimaire au 07 octobre 2013
Réseau_CREF_EA_Rapport_des_progr_Septembre_2013-2
Rapport_eval_R_CREF_ver_finale
Réseau CREF contract final 2012-2014
IUCN NL - KM 3B-__Post__ Conflict- indiv projects
MFSII Evaluation Doc_RCREF_IUCNNL_EA
Member audit reports
PV notari de la 9 AGO
FINAL rapport 1ere Mission novembre
Rapport 2ème mission
Textes de base du Réseau CREF

*From PIDP*

PIDP_Eco development du territoire de Nyiragongo
Carte_Lufito_Draft 1
Carte_Kambushi1
Carte_Kilali_Draft1
attest-occupation-terre
croquis, champs Kitwa
croquis-champs-Misima

**Baseline visit: 1-2 October, 2012**

**Endline visit: 28-30 April, 2014**

### List of Informants

**Internal to organisation**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alphonse Valivambene</td>
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<td>Elias Kalondero</td>
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<td>Faustin Ngulu</td>
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<td>Alain Bebu</td>
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<td>Thomas d’Aquin MUTI</td>
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<td>Ephrem Vitia</td>
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**External to organisation**

IUCN Amsterdam, Tina Lain, 28.08.2012  
UNDSS Bukavu, Idrissa Mbaye, 05.09.2012  
CREDDHO, Goma, meeting with Gautier Muhindo Misonia, coordonnateur; and Jeredie, Charge de programmes, 02.10.2012  
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