



Information note N° 5 (January 2015)
Contribution of Non-Wood Forest Products to the
Millennium Development Goals:
Evidence from COMIFAC countries



Enhancing the Contribution of Non-Wood Forest Products
to Food Security in Central Africa (GCP/RAF/479/AFB)

1. Introduction:

In 2000, the United Nations (UN) adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) during its 55th session. There are eight MDG aimed at “building a better and secured world for the XXIst century, a more peaceful world, most prosperous and more equal, united by common values such as freedom, equity, solidarity, tolerance, respect of nature and share of responsibility” for the 2015 horizon.



The agricultural sector from a perspective of rural development including agriculture, livestock, fisheries, aquaculture and forestry is important in order to contribute to the elimination of extreme poverty and hunger.

The Congo Basin forests are rich in Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFP), which according to FAO, are resources of biological origin other than wood coming from forests and trees outside forests. They provide food, medicine, energy, fishing tools and construction materials. The objective of this information note is to:

- i) show that NWFP contribute to the MDG;
- ii) sensitize policy makers and opinion leaders to better understand the importance of these products and to integrate them better in strategies and programs aimed at reducing poverty and strengthening the food security and nutrition of the populations of Central Africa;
- iii) alert the international community to better integrate specific MDG targets on forests and forest products in the post 2015 era.

2. The Millennium Development Goals (MDG)

The UN has defined eight MDG targets listed below:

- MDG 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
- MDG 2. Achieve universal primary education;
- MDG 3. Promote gender equality and empower women;
- MDG 4. Reduce child mortality;
- MDG 5. Improve maternal health;
- MDG 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- MDG 7. Ensure environment sustainability;
- MDG 8. Global partnership for development.



3. The contribution of NWFP to MDG

The contribution of NWFP to MDG was obtained from a series of surveys carried out in Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon and Rwanda within the framework of several NWFP projects implemented by FAO in Central Africa, under the supervision of the Forestry Commission of Central Africa (COMIFAC). Each household that sold NWFP was asked to provide detailed information on all the different uses of the money received after sale. The results are shown in table 1 below:

Table 1: Contribution of NWFP to MGD in COMIFAC countries

COMIFAC countries	Uses	% of revenue allocated	MDG targets
Burundi	Food	28.0	MDG 1
	Children education	9.5	MDG 2
	Health	5.9	MDG 4, 5, 6
	Clothing	8.9	MDG 1
	Other	47.7	
Total		100.0	
Cameroon	Food	26.4	MDG 1
	Children education	29.1	MDG 2
	Health	24.7	MDG 4, 5, 6
	Clothing	6.7	MDG 1
	Other	13.1	
Total		100.0	
Central African Republic	Food	19.6	MDG 1
	Children education	14.9	MDG 2
	Health	21.7	MDG 4, 5, 6
	Clothing	17.0	MDG 1
	Other	26.8	
Total		100.0	
Chad	Food	32.0	MDG 1
	Children education	14.0	MDG 2
	Health	26.0	MDG 4, 5, 6
	Clothing	15.0	MDG 1
	Other	13.0	
Total		100.0	
Congo	Food	29.1	MDG 1
	Children education	11.0	MDG 2
	Health	26.1	MDG 4, 5, 6
	Clothing	16.5	MDG 1
	Other	17.3	
Total		100.0	
Democratic Republic of Congo	Food	32.0	MDG 1
	Children education	26.0	MDG 2
	Health	14.0	MDG 4, 5, 6
	Clothing	10.0	MDG 1
	Other	18.0	
Total		100.0	
Gabon	Food	27.0	MDG 1
	Children education	10.9	MDG 2
	Health	17.5	MDG 4, 5, 6
	Clothing	7.3	MDG 1
	Other	37.7	
Total		100.0	
Rwanda	Food	16.9	MDG 1
	Children education	10.1	MDG 2
	Health	13.4	MDG 4, 5, 6
	Clothing	7.8	MDG 1
	Other	51.8	
Total		100.0	

Source: FAO NWFP projects. The category other include income generating activities; kitchen ware; construction material; agricultural equipment; savings; support to friends; debt reimbursement; payment of electricity bill.

The results of table 1 show that NWFP contribute to MDG 1, 2, 4, 5, 6. In all countries, the expenditures on food for the household, children education, family health represent between 40 to 80 percent of the

revenues received from sales of NWFP. The purchase of food for home consumption contributes to food security and nutrition for households thereby contributing directly to national food security programs implemented by the majority of COMIFAC countries. The expenditures on health improve family well-being and household agricultural productivity. The expenditures on children education allow maintain girls and boys in school. They are good investments which benefits could be more important in the future because well-educated children could get good jobs that will lift their households out of extreme poverty.

NWFP contribute to MDG 3, promote gender equality and empower women, because the trainings on the Market Analysis & Development (MA&D) approach initiated through FAO NWFP projects put a major emphasis on women who in Central Africa exploit NWFP more than men. In addition, women are more involved in the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) created and in the Enterprise Development Plans (EDP) elaborated through the MA&D approach. In short, the MA&D approach strengthens the entrepreneurial capacities of women and the revenues they get allow them to be more empowered.

NWFP contribute also to MDG 7, ensure environmental sustainability, because these products are an important component of forest biodiversity and therefore have an important role to play in carbon sequestration and climate change adaptation. Besides, the domestication of NWFP allows the populations to integrate NWFP trees in agricultural landscapes which will reduce pressure on forest resources thereby having a positive effect on the environment.

4. Perspectives

As shown in this information note, NWFP contribute to seven out of height MDG targets defined by the UN. For this reason, these products need to be better known through appropriate sensitization and communication by the media. A continuous dialogue needs to be established with policy makers and opinion leaders to better sensitize them on the importance of including NWFP in poverty reduction and food security strategy programs in Central Africa. With the new MDG targets that will be defined for the post 2015 era¹, the contribution of forests and forest products should be more visible in Central Africa. The international community is therefore urged to define new specific MDG targets on forests and forest products.

¹ The development program post 2015 will focus on the following themes: to end poverty and hunger; improve health and education; build more sustainable cities; combat climate change and protect oceans and forests.