

Inclusive approaches to REDD+ in the Congo Basin

# The road to transformation of practices on the (forest) land

by Isilda Nhantumbo<sup>1</sup> and Raymond Achu Samndong<sup>2</sup>

**The vast Congo Basin rainforest is of great value for the global community, since its immense carbon stocks help to reduce global warming and climate change. However, there are many challenges to preserving these carbon stocks in a context where extraction of natural resources above and below ground is the main source of the revenues of countries, sustenance of livelihoods and economic development.**

REDD+ has given an impetus to interrogating and transforming the development models based on the unsustainable extraction of wood, biomass energy and conversion of forests to other land uses, including subsistence and commercial agriculture and infrastructure. REDD+ can also address domestic and external demands such as the growing timber markets in China (Weng et al 2014; You and Peng 2015; Mayers 2015; Nhantumbo, 2016) that contribute to forest degradation.

The position of the Congo Basin countries in the Central African Forest Commission COMIFAC on REDD+ is the recognition that REDD+ can generate non-carbon benefits, including improved forest governance, ecosystem services

provision, climate change adaptation, improved economics, improved livelihoods, and support of social and cultural values (Katerere et al., 2015). This suggests that REDD+ as the main instrument to compensate for reduced emissions can be combined with other Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) mechanisms. This may include payment for biodiversity offsets, development of domestic tax mechanisms on water and hydro-electricity. Additional sources of revenue include tax on other forms of energy (oil and gas) and mineral resources. These can generate revenues for results-based payments for these multidimensional watershed and landscape level services. In essence, REDD+ should be part of broader prosperity and sustainable development strategies. Table 1 summarises the status of REDD+ in the three Congo Basin countries in the year 2016, where the process is advanced.

Right: Women return from harvesting cassava in Buya 1 village, Bikoro, Equateur Province, DRC.

<sup>1</sup> Isilda Nhantumbo is REDD+ expert and senior researcher at the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). She was born in Maputo, Mozambique.

<sup>2</sup> Raymond Achu Samndong from Cameroon has conducted field research on forest and REDD+ governance in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He is now finalizing his thesis at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences.

