

## Two illustrated guides to promote forest rehabilitation by and for farmers in Central Africa

○ *Technical knowledge is essential for the deployment of forest restoration activities*



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Tree nursery in Yaosenge – Benjamin Bisimwa, CIFOR-ICRAF

The PROFEAAC project (Promouvoir et Formaliser l'Exploitation Artisanale du bois d'œuvre en Afrique Centrale – Promoting and Formalizing Artisanal Timber Exploitation in Central Africa) has just published two guides in comic strip form to explain how to set up a nursery and plant trees, based on its experience in the DRC.

CIFOR-ICRAF and its partners have been working for some fifteen years on the issue of combating illegal logging which remains an international priority as the domestic markets of Central African countries are supplied very largely by sawn timber of informal origin.

Launched at the end of 2019 and financed by the FFEM (*French Funds for World Environment*), the PROFEAAC project proposes an integrated approach to the formalization and development of artisanal timber harvesting, from the management of timber resources to the demand for sawn timber in domestic markets. Its overall aim is to reduce the degradation of rural forests in Central Africa by formalizing and rationalizing artisanal timber harvesting.

Over the last ten years, efforts and policies to promote the rehabilitation of forest landscapes have been on the increase, particularly in tropical countries. Unfortunately, although one of the pillars of forest restoration, the participation of local populations remains weak, or even lacking, in most tropical reforestation initiatives, particularly in Africa. This situation is in line with one of the objectives of the PROFEAAC project, which aims to deploy measures facilitating the planting of trees by populations in their customary terroirs.

Since 2020, CIRAD has been working to implement this approach in the Yalikandja-Yanonge District, located in the Yangambi Landscape in the DRC, following a series of steps to get customary landowners interested and then involved in the forest rehabilitation of some of their plots.

According to Emilien Dubiez of CIRAD, *“too many forest restoration initiatives are launched without any analysis of the expectations, needs, perceptions, contexts, institutions or capacities of communities, and generally end in failure. Knowledge of the socio-environmental and economic contexts of intervention zones is an essential prerequisite for the deployment of forest restoration activities. Only technical itineraries adapted to these contexts and meeting the expectations of the local population will enable us to improve forest resource management in the long term”*.

To meet this challenge, Dubiez and his team began with a diagnostic study of the practices, dynamics and knowledge of land and resource management in the eight villages selected for the site.

The second stage consisted in collecting requests for forestry rehabilitation volunteers from the people living in these villages. In 2021, nearly three hundred individual requests were received by the project, of which 106 were selected for support, and almost as many in 2022.



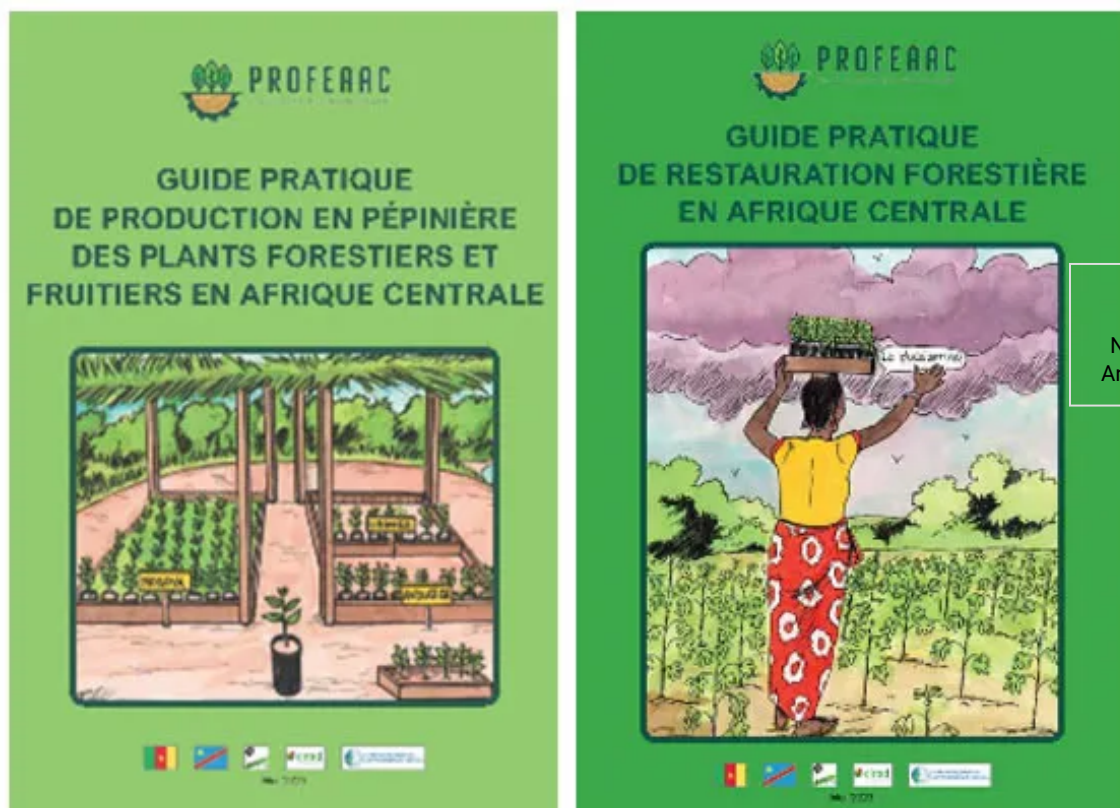
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A sample of volunteer planters in the Yanonge District – Emilien Dubiez, CIRAD

Then it was time to grow the seedlings of the requested species and plant them in such a way as to maximize the chances of survival. The project provided technical support to the volunteers and supplied the materials needed to build the nursery, produce the seedlings and plant them. The choice of species and reforestation sites was made by the volunteers themselves. To date, over 200 volunteers have been trained in forest restoration, nursery construction, the production of forest and fruit seedlings and the reforestation of areas over which they have customary rights.

“The idea is to empower and give a sense of responsibility to people who want to plant trees in their agricultural plots,” explains Benjamin Bisimwa, a researcher at CIFOR-ICRAF in Kisangani. “However, how can we expect these trees to survive and grow if they don’t bring any real benefit to those who planted them, and if the planters don’t have the basic knowledge to make this investment fruitful?”

To fill the technical knowledge gap in villages in the Tshopo Province, the project produced two illustrated practical guides: “*Nursery Production of Forest and Fruit Seedlings in Central Africa*,” to facilitate the understanding of the stages involved in tree seedling production, and “*Forest Restoration in Central Africa*,” which sums up the basic principles and good practices of planting fruit and forest trees.



Written in plain language, these two illustrative guides can be understood by everyone, without any need for an intermediary. The French editions are rounded out by versions in Lingala and Swahili for widespread distribution in the villages where the PROFEAAC project operates, so that they can be used by current and future cohorts of “planters.” The two guides also benefited from the talent of Kisantu-based cartoonist François Ntangu Kibuaka (known as “Targou”), who expertly captured the reality on the ground.

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The “Promoting and Formalizing Artisanal Logging in Central Africa” (*Promouvoir et formaliser l’exploitation artisanale du bois d’œuvre en Afrique centrale*, PROFEEAAC) project adopts an integrated approach to the formalization of artisanal logging that links the sustainable management of wood resources to the development of domestic demand for legal sawn timber.

Mostly funded by the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM), the project seeks to build up the capacity of small-scale loggers to operate within the law by obtaining the necessary permits or titles, and to develop their commercial and financial competences to improve their living conditions.

The project is coordinated by CIFOR-ICRAF and the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife’s Department for the Promotion and Processing of Forest Products in Cameroon, and by Tshopo Provincial Coordination for the Environment and Sustainable Development in the DRC.

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*Available in [French].*

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