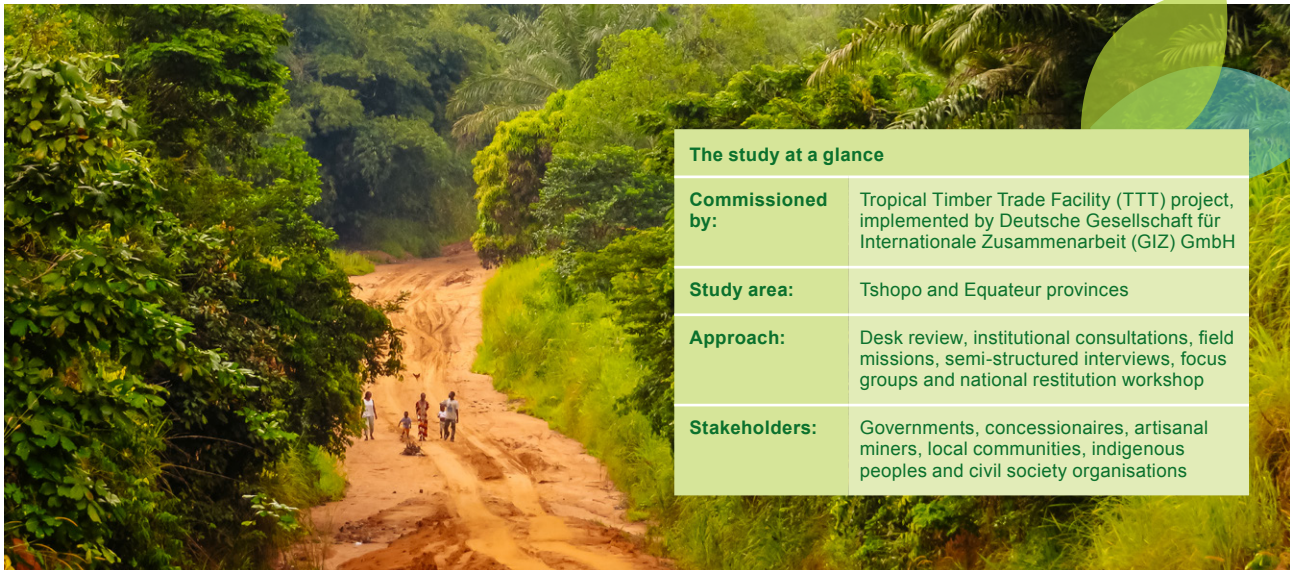


Policy Brief

From commitments to results: improving the implementation of social clauses in forest concessions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo



The study at a glance

Commissioned by:	Tropical Timber Trade Facility (TTT) project, implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Study area:	Tshopo and Equateur provinces
Approach:	Desk review, institutional consultations, field missions, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and national restitution workshop
Stakeholders:	Governments, concessionaires, artisanal miners, local communities, indigenous peoples and civil society organisations

Why this brief?

Social clauses are a key instrument of forest governance in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as in other Congo Basin countries. They set out concessionaires' commitments to local communities and indigenous peoples in terms of infrastructure, social services and local development. Despite progress since the adoption of the Forest Code, implementation remains uneven due to weak local governance, limited institutional capacity and insufficient monitoring mechanisms. This note presents the main findings of a study carried out in the provinces of Tshopo and Equateur and proposes recommendations to improve the application of social clauses.

The challenge is no longer to adopt new rules, but to ensure the effective, transparent and fair implementation of social clauses.

This will largely depend on the ability of institutions, concessionaires and communities to turn commitments into concrete, measurable and sustainable results.

Encouraging, but uneven results

Social clauses are embedded in most industrial logging concessions, whether they are operated by Chinese or non-Chinese companies. In several communities, they have enabled the construction of schools, health centres, roads, bridges and other infrastructure. The works carried out through social clauses are generally recognised by the local population as important contributions to improving local living conditions. Social clauses have strengthened relationships between communities and concessionaires, improved companies' reputations, and fostered closer dialogue among stakeholders.

However, the results remain uneven. The achievements vary depending on the concession and operator. Chinese companies are often perceived as the most visible on the ground because of their investment capacity and the significance of the infrastructures developed. However, they are frequently criticized for the lack of communication with communities. On the other hand, African and other non-Chinese companies tend to have stronger community consultation mechanisms in place, but they face financial and operational constraints that may affect the implementation of some projects.

The gaps observed between commitments and achievements are closely linked to local governance. Weaknesses relate to coordination, institutional capacity, transparency and follow-up on commitments.

Main challenges identified in the study :

- **Limited information:** Communities have insufficient access to agreements and monitoring of commitments.
- **Unequal participation:** the functioning of local governance committees (CLG) and local monitoring committees (CLS) remains variable, with little involvement of women, youth and indigenous peoples.
- **Mixed execution:** several infrastructures have been completed, but delays, partial construction and insufficient maintenance limit their impact.
- **Insufficient monitoring:** The lack of harmonised tools reduces the transparency, comparability and effectiveness of control.

Recommendations and call to action

The results of this study provide clear directives for local authorities and companies in the wood sector. These insights can also be applied to other countries as general factors for the success of social clauses.

Action steps for decision-makers

The different levels of public administration are recognised as the main institutions responsible for the control and monitoring of social clauses. Their role is essential in the implementation of the regulatory framework and in ensuring compliance with the commitments made by the concessionaires.

Based on the results of this study, five priority areas of action are recommended for the central administration and its branches:

1. Strengthen local governance

Consolidate the functioning of local governance committees and local monitoring committees, clarify their responsibilities and promote a more inclusive participation of women, youth and indigenous peoples.

2. Strengthen the capacities of supply-chain officers

Provide the competent services with sufficient human, technical and logistical resources to ensure regular monitoring; support the actors in the field and ensure compliance with contractual commitments.

3. Improve transparency and accountability

Facilitate access to social clause agreements, implementation schedules and monitoring reports. Accessible information strengthens trust between stakeholders and promotes better citizen control.

4. Harmonise monitoring tools

Establish common monitoring tools based on harmonised indicators, standardised evaluation grids and shared procedures in order to improve the quality of monitoring missions and the comparability of results.

5. Promote a culture of results

Regularly assess not only the fulfilment of commitments, but also the effects of social clauses on the living conditions of communities in order to guide decisions on the basis of measurable results.

Roadmap

Short term

Deploy harmonised monitoring tools, strengthen control missions and improve access to information relating to social clauses.

Medium term

Strengthen the capacities of administrations, professionalize CLGs/CLSs and improve complaint management mechanisms.

Long term

Integrate the monitoring of social clauses into the national forest governance system in a sustainable way and regularly assess their effects on local development.





Action steps for companies

- Create transparency by publishing agreements, budgets and progress in simple, accessible formats and in local languages.
- Involve and engage communities throughout the process: consult them early and regularly, include women and youth, and document decisions.
- Regularly monitor the progress and the quality of works by providing clear channels for complaints and appeals, and applying consequences in case of non-compliance.
- Aim for sustainable results: plan maintenance, train local stakeholders and check that equipment is still working after handover.
- Strengthen local capacities and use common models: train authorities and community representatives, fund field visits and report in a comparable and standardised way.

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Call to action

Improving the implementation of social clauses requires a shared commitment from all stakeholders. Public administrations, concessionaires, local communities, indigenous peoples, civil society organisations and technical and financial partners are invited to strengthen their collaboration in order to:

- **improve the implementation of social clauses;**
- **harmonise monitoring and evaluation practices;**
- **strengthen the transparency and accountability of actors;**
- **promote effective community participation local governance mechanisms;**
- **regularly measure the results and impacts of the social commitments.**

Coordination between stakeholders is an essential condition for the success of social clauses.

More information (in French):

Tshimpanga, P. (July 2026). *Compliance with social clauses in the Democratic Republic of Congo: challenges and pragmatic solutions*. Consultancy report. GIZ, Tropical Timber Trade Facility (TTT) Project – DFS Deutsche Forstservice GmbH.

Tshimpanga, P. (July 2026). *Operational guide for monitoring the implementation of social clauses for forestry administrations, concessionaires and community structures*. Technical guide. GIZ, Tropical Timber Trade Facility (TTT) Project – DFS Deutsche Forstservice GmbH.

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