

CENTRAL AFRICAN DETAIL EXPERIENCE: WHAT US FIA FIELD STAFF CAN TEACH AND LEARN THROUGH SHORT TERM ASSIGNMENTS – DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AND CAMEROON

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Abstract—REDD+, Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation is a United Nations initiative targeted to combat atmospheric carbon dioxide and global warming by providing monetary incentives to developing countries to preserve their forested land as effective carbon sinks. In order for these countries to receive this monetary benefit, they must develop and implement forest monitoring, reporting and validation (MRV) programs that effectively quantify the amount and change of “forested” land, the “health” of the forests, and estimate the amount of carbon in these forests. The USFS International Programs is involved in REDD+ by assisting these developing countries in the development of these MRV programs by facilitating technical exchanges with experts from the United States. Not only do countries benefit from this technical expertise, but awareness within all parties being part of a global community is raised, as well as the importance of effective across border communication. Despite vast personal differences, cultural differences, differences in governments and how policies are made and implemented, relationships are built around a shared human commonality. Central Africa is home to some of the most significant forests in the world both in terms of biodiversity and carbon sequestration. Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Cameroon are two countries that are presently engaged in the REDD+ process and are in varying stages of MRV development. I’ve had the opportunity to be involved in two different short-term assignments first to DRC and then to Cameroon over the past two years. While I was able to share some of what I have learned from my years working for FIA, I gained a greater appreciation for the global importance of our work, and a greater appreciation for the importance of open communication, cultural sensitivity, and patience.

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