



ANNUAL REPORT 2014

SUPPORTING AFRICAN ORGANISATIONS TO LEAD CHANGE IN THE CONGO BASIN



I must say that we have had some wonderful moments working with a friendly and considerate group. This is something I will always remember. I think that we have started something that could be really fruitful, because human development has to start deep inside each person.

**MOISE LANTOUM,
LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT,
BRAZZAVILLE, REPUBLIC OF CONGO**



CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| From the Executive Director | 6 |
| The year in review | 9 |
| Focusing on leadership. | 10 |
| Supporting collective action. | 12 |
| Creating spaces for learning & exchange | 14 |
| Planning a sustainable future | 16 |
| Strengthening networks. | 18 |
| Bringing people together across borders | 20 |
| Questioning how African organisations should be supported | 21 |
| Looking ahead | 22 |
| Accounts | 25 |
| Acknowledgements | 28 |



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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2014 has been a year of change and growth, both for Well Grounded and for the organisations that we work with. We are all working in a fast-moving and changing context that throws up many challenges, but civil society organisations in the Congo Basin are continuing to make a difference and there were some fantastic successes in 2014. For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, more than ten years of campaigning and community action by Congolese and international organisations resulted in legislation being passed that gives communities a formal legal basis to manage and control their forests. We are thrilled about this result – it represents many years of hard work by many, many people. Well Grounded is committed to continuing to support African civil society organisations to achieve this kind of impact.

In terms of Well Grounded, we started a new leadership programme in 2014 that we hope will contribute to more positive changes in forest law and policy in Central Africa, as we support people to lead even more effective African civil society organisations. It has been a great experience for Well Grounded, to bring together leaders to learn more about leadership, to gain new leadership skills, and to share their challenges and their successes with one another. All of us come away from each leadership workshop with new insights into ourselves and our own work and fresh enthusiasm as we hear about the exciting work that so many people are doing on the ground.

The year also saw the growth of a rich new collaboration with Maliasili Initiatives, in which our two organisations worked together to do research about the organisation development of African civil society organisations.

Alongside these cross-cutting pieces of work, we have found that more and more local organisations are approaching Well Grounded for support in their development as they grow and change – and are faced by new challenges.

The pressure on forests and the need to protect and promote the rights of forest communities in Africa is more important than ever, as the hunger for land and

resources becomes ever greater and the eyes of the world turn towards the vast areas of the Congo Basin forest. The civil society organisations that we work with are at the front line of trying to ensure that forests and livelihoods are protected. We hope that Well Grounded's contribution – to help these organisations become even better at what they do and even more effective at supporting communities to speak for themselves – is playing an important part in ensuring a sustainable future for African forests and the people who depend on them.



Cath Long
Executive Director



As a longstanding organisation with well-established practices we were very impressed by Well Grounded's methodological approach, which allowed participants to express themselves. This is the first event that has kept us engaged and attentive for the whole day. No-one tried to avoid doing the exercises and we still remember everything that we covered each day, even though none of us had notepads, there were no Power Point presentations and no-one asked for one.

**HOZIER NANA CHIMI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
SERVICE D'APPUI AUX INITIATIVES LOCALES DE DÉVELOPPEMENT
(SAILD), CAMEROON**

THE YEAR

IN REVIEW



FOCUSING ON LEADERSHIP

Organisations need strong and committed leaders to reach their goals. Well Grounded believes that leadership is a choice: anyone can be a good leader, regardless of his or her position in an organisation. Unfortunately, those involved in civil society in central Africa have few opportunities to develop their leadership skills. In 2014, Well Grounded launched a Leadership Development Programme to respond to this gap.



Bringing leaders together

Well Grounded ran three workshops in 2014 to launch the Programme – one in Cameroon and two in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) – for people from 36 different civil society organisations. The workshops provided a space for leaders and potential leaders to explore questions together, such as:

- What is leadership?
- What is the difference between leadership and management?
- What skills support good leadership?
- What forms of communication allow leaders to best support other people in their team?



Supporting leaders to take action

Afterwards, Well Grounded followed up with participants through coaching sessions, to support them in putting their learning into practice. Further workshops, coaching and peer learning will be offered in 2015 for leaders to develop their skills and confidence.



Building momentum

So far, the Leadership Development Programme has been highly successful. Participants have given us a lot of positive feedback and we generated a buzz amongst civil society actors in the region: for the third workshop, held in eastern DRC, word had clearly spread, as Well Grounded received 110 applications for only 14 places.



I would highly recommend this workshop to my colleagues, as they would be surprised to find that leadership is a skill that everyone can develop – even though some people are born with traits that serve them particularly well in this role. Because leaders are essentially there to serve other people, they also need the kind of humility that is essential for good teamwork.

LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT, YAOUNDÉ, CAMEROON



SUPPORTING COLLECTIVE ACTION

The Plateforme pour la Gestion Durable des Forêts (PGDF) was set up by a group of civil society activists in the Republic of Congo in 2008. Their first goal was to bring a civil society perspective to the negotiation of a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA)¹ on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade, where they had quite an impact and managed to bring a number of issues related to community and indigenous rights to the fore.

¹ The VPA is an agreement between the Republic of Congo and the European Union that commits both parties to trade in legal timber only. For more information, please see: www.euflegt.efi.int/vpa-unpacked



Identifying priorities to strengthen the network

Despite their success to date, the Platform members believe that they can be even more effective. They have identified four areas to focus on in order to strengthen the network:

- **Using opportunities to influence decisions and policies more strategically;**
- **Ensuring that they better represent the people directly affected by threats to forests – women, indigenous peoples and people living outside the capital city who live in the forest;**
- **Working together more effectively by looking at issues like coordination and internal communications;**
- **Ensuring that their work has a long-term impact.**



Improving the network's effectiveness

In 2014, Well Grounded and the PGDF started a programme of work, funded for two years by the Waterloo Foundation, to address these four areas of action – to support the Platform to become more strategic, representative, effective and sustainable.



Collaborating with other key actors

At the same time, the PGDF has been working closely with two other international organisations, Client Earth and FERN. Collaboration between all four organisations enabled the Platform to focus its work in 2014, and to make, among other things, important contributions to the national forest code that is under review by the Congolese government.





CREATING SPACES FOR LEARNING & EXCHANGE

In 2014, Well Grounded supported several organisations that work on independent and community monitoring of forests: a mechanism that has been used globally since the 1990s to try and improve forest governance and reduce illegal logging. A forest observer can be anyone ranging from a community member to an officially recognised formal “Independent Monitor,” but their job is the same: to carry out field investigations to monitor the work of official law enforcement agencies, to document illegal activities and to make this information public so that action can be taken.



Initiating collaborative action

Each organisation involved with independent and community monitoring that Well Grounded has been working with has its own unique history, vision and approach, but most of them are newly established and all of them face challenges in doing their work. Based on these common factors, in early 2014 Well Grounded organised a workshop to bring together four of these organisations – Cercle d'Appui à la Gestion Durable des Forêts (CAGDF), Field Legality Advisory Group (FLAG), Forêts et Développement Rurale (FODER) and Observation de la Gouvernance Forestière (OGF) – to share their experiences and learn from one another: both about the technical and political challenges of their work and about how they have developed as organisations. Since then, the participating organisations have arranged their own follow-up meetings and are developing joint projects together.²

² Some of these organisations also receive important technical support from Resource Extraction Monitoring: www.rem.org.uk



Supporting individual organisations

Beyond initiating these collaborative efforts, Well Grounded also continued to support some of the individual organisations with their own internal development processes. For instance, Well Grounded supported FLAG and OGF throughout the year as they worked together on a project to improve independent monitoring in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



Bringing about positive change

Well Grounded believes that supporting collective action in parallel with supporting individual actors involved is one of the most powerful ways to bring about positive change.



PLANNING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Réseau CREF is a network of civil society organisations based in North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They have been working together for more than ten years, addressing a range of issues affecting communities and natural resources: from practical agroforestry initiatives, to supporting communities to manage and protect their natural forests, to major campaigns to challenge policies and projects that threaten the livelihoods of local people and the rich biodiversity of their province (home to some 480 of the last 880 mountain gorillas living in the wild).



Planning for self-reliance

In 2014, Réseau CREF, who have had great support from a number of international organisations over the years,³ started to look at ways that they can become more self-reliant. Well Grounded helped them to develop a business plan that focuses on ways that individual members and the network itself can generate their own income to fund their activities.



Promoting women's leadership

Réseau CREF has also been a very active partner in Well Grounded's Leadership Development Programme and is planning to start up a programme that focuses particularly on women. This is because throughout the Congo Basin, women are disproportionately dependent on forests for their own survival and that of their families, yet very few women have a chance to influence the decisions that affect them. Réseau CREF is therefore exploring how to support more women to take a leading role at local, provincial and national levels in order to change this dynamic.

³ Rainforest Foundation Norway, IUCN Netherlands and Synchronicity Earth are some of Réseau CREF's committed and long-term partners.



STRENGTHENING NETWORKS

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Well Grounded has been working since 2010 with the Dynamique des Groupes des Peuples Autochtones (DGPA), a national network focused on promoting the rights of indigenous peoples, to support it in using participatory approaches in its work and to strengthen it as a network.



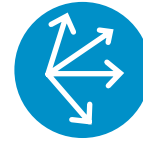
Designing a national consultation process

Over the past couple of years, Well Grounded has supported the DGPA in the design and implementation of a national consultation process about a law that aims to protect the rights of indigenous peoples. Thanks to DGPA's effectiveness in working with a coalition of Members of Parliament (MPs) and ensuring that these MPs have taken the lead from start to finish, the draft law is now going through Parliament and we have hopes that it will be adopted by the end of 2015.



Reviewing the network's structure and way of working

Whilst completing this impressive work on the indigenous peoples' law, the DGPA also became increasingly interested in reviewing how it functions as a network. Networks always face challenges in how they organise themselves: they must figure out how to balance the needs and interests of individual members with those of the network as a whole, and be clear about how the network can strengthen its members rather than becoming a drain on their energy and resources.



Listening to members views about the way forward

With support from the Norwegian government via Rainforest Foundation Norway, and in collaboration with another independent consultant, in 2014 Well Grounded facilitated an internal review process to explore these difficult issues by visiting all DGPA members in the provinces and listening to their perspectives on how the network should develop.

A photograph of two men in a meeting. The man on the left is wearing a dark suit and is pointing towards the right. The man on the right is wearing a white shirt and a grey sweater, smiling broadly with his arms raised. The background is a plain wall with a yellow section on the right.

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER ACROSS BORDERS

Another interesting collaboration that developed in 2014 was with the Central African Regional Programme for the Environment of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Well Grounded partnered with IUCN to organise a forum for 30 civil society organisations working on climate change and conservation of the environment in the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁴ This event was particularly interesting because it brought together people from organisations based in five different provinces, many of whom had not previously met one another. We received really positive feedback from the meeting and several organisations planned follow-up meetings in their own provinces to take forward actions at a provincial level. Well Grounded will continue to collaborate with IUCN in 2015 to convene similar forums in other countries within the region.

⁴ The forum was also supported by IUCN Netherlands and the Global Environment Facility.



QUESTIONING HOW AFRICAN ORGANISATIONS SHOULD BE SUPPORTED

In 2014, Well Grounded started a research initiative with another organisation working on similar issues in East Africa, Maliasili Initiatives.⁵ Between us, we interviewed more than 75 people – including African civil society leaders, international organisations, donors and organisation development practitioners – to explore what works and what doesn't in terms of organisation development for African civil society organisations working in the conservation, natural resources and community rights sectors.

Initial findings

So far, the research has shown that although civil society organisations are already having a real and positive impact on natural resource governance and community rights, there are plenty of barriers to them scaling up their work. Most significant are internal issues, such as leadership and how to find and retain good people as well as the resources to support them, combined with the negative impact that some current development funding and “capacity building” practices have on national organisations. The full research report will be published in 2015.

⁵ <http://www.maliasili.org/>



LOOKING

AHEAD



The Well Grounded team is proud of what we achieved in 2014 – we feel that we have made an important contribution to strengthening civil society in Central Africa and we have learned a lot along the way. We are looking forward to continuing this work in 2015.

Supporting leadership development

We will launch a Leadership Development Programme in the Republic of Congo in April 2015 and will also continue to work with participants from the 2014 workshops held in Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) by offering a second series of workshops and ongoing coaching in 2015. Due to high demand in eastern DRC, Well Grounded will also be launching a second round of the Leadership Development Programme in Goma in September 2015.



Strengthening the Forest Platform in the Republic of Congo

The programme of work that started in 2014 in collaboration with the PGDF in the Republic of Congo, to support them in becoming more strategic, representative, effective and sustainable, will continue into 2015. This work will include a series of consultation workshops with Platform members in different Departments (provinces) throughout the country, to support them in thinking through their common vision, values and priorities, as well as their different roles and responsibilities. This consultation process will be followed by the facilitation of a General Assembly, where the membership will vote on key decisions related to the structure and decision-making mechanisms of the Platform.



Building a new agenda for organisation development

The research that Well Grounded is undertaking with Maliasili Initiatives on what works and what doesn't in terms of organisation development for African civil society organisations has generated interest in further work with both the Capacity for Conservation initiative – a network of conservation organisations working on capacity development – and the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI).⁶ We will be co-organising and co-facilitating a day on leadership and organisation

development with members of the Capacity for Conservation initiative at a conference in Nairobi in July 2015, during which African civil society leaders will pose some challenging questions and ideas. RRI is supporting Well Grounded and Maliasili Initiatives to carry out joint activities in 2015 that aim to build the case for increased investment in organisation development for African civil society organisations.



Getting to the grassroots

Well Grounded is increasingly finding that organisations based outside capital cities are calling on its services as they realise that the Well Grounded team is prepared to visit organisations on the ground and to develop an individual response to each particular situation. For instance, Well Grounded now has a waiting list of client organisations in Cameroon, with which we will be developing work in early 2015. Well Grounded hopes to work with many more community-based organisations throughout the region in 2015 and beyond.

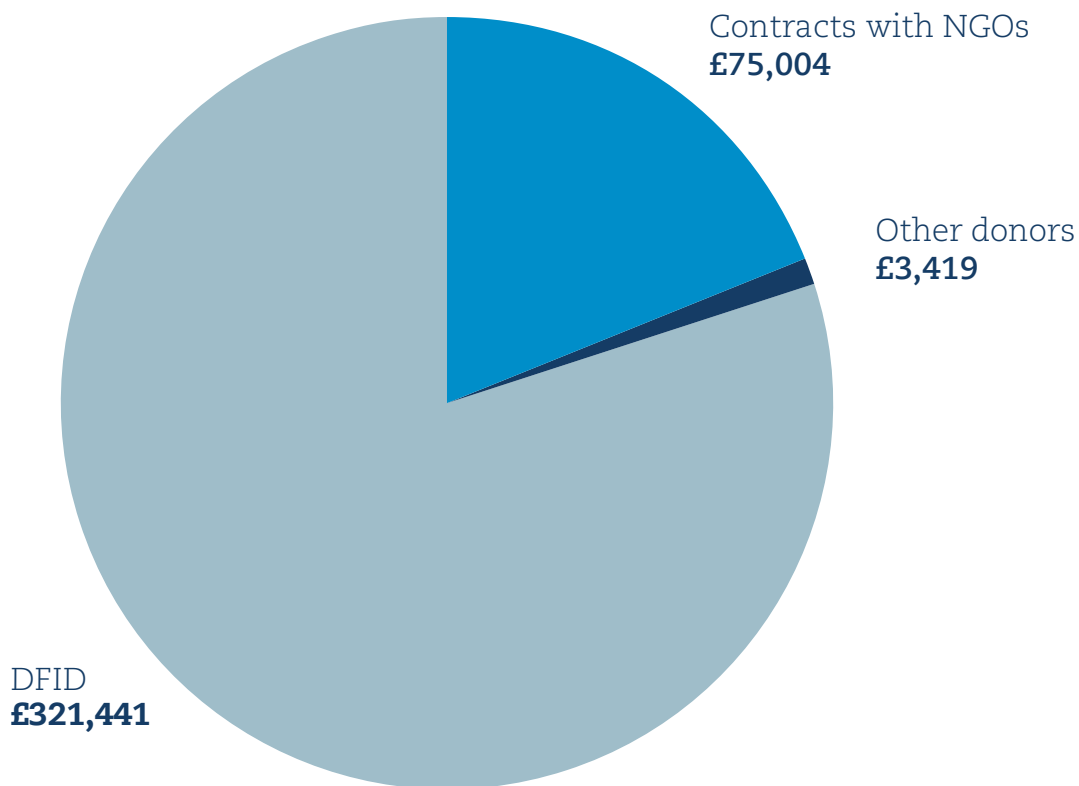
⁶ <http://www.rightsandresources.org/>

ACCOUNTS

2014

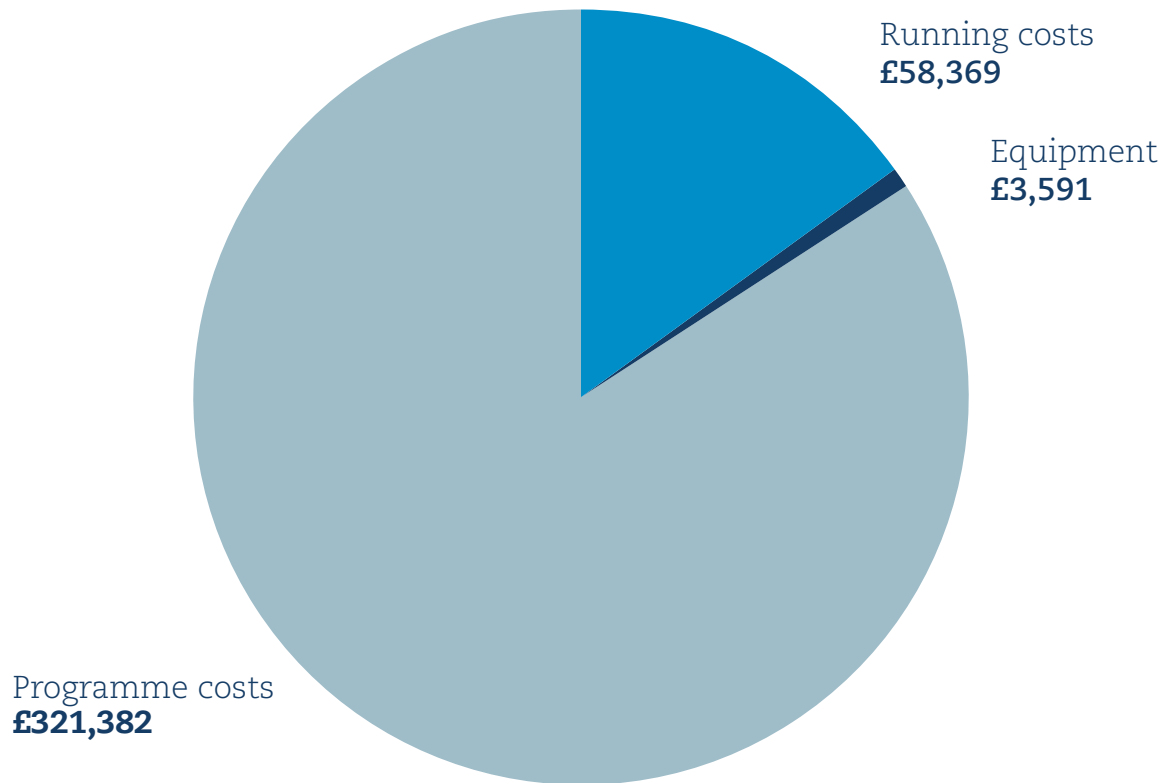


INCOME



..... Total Income **£399,864**

EXPENDITURE



..... Total Expenditure **£383,342**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Well Grounded would like to thank all of our clients – leading african civil society organisations – for putting their trust in us, and for the important and inspiring work that they are doing to develop their own organisations and to defend community rights and promote good governance of natural resources in the Congo Basin.

Well Grounded would also like to thank the following individuals and organisations for going the extra mile to support our team and our work:

Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement

Dan Hall at Diversity Travel

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Katie Giddings

Katy Scholfield at Synchronicity Earth

Maliasili Initiatives

Rainforest Foundation Norway

Rights and Resources Initiative

Samworth Foundation

Ternstrom Consulting

Vamory Traoré at Web Architecture and Technologies Ltd.

Waterloo Foundation

Will Campbell



At one point it was hard to see where the discussion was heading when we were talking about our organisation's 'target group'. It didn't look as though we were going to get anywhere, but things became clearer as it went on and we did get somewhere in the end. You gave us something that we wouldn't have been able to get on our own, and taught us a lot. Despite our many years of experience we still have much to learn.

**WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT
STRATEGIC PROCESS WITH SERVICE D'APPUI AUX INITIATIVES
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