

## STORIES OF CHANGE: CFLEDD

# Catalysing Efforts to Enable Women and Men to Play Key Roles in Natural Resource Management in the DRC

By Jimm Chick



**The Coalition of Female Leaders for the Environment and Sustainable Development (CFLEDD) is a network of women and women’s organisations that seeks to promote the representation of women in environmental protection efforts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Well Grounded facilitated organisational development processes with CFLEDD between 2017 and 2019, enabling them to develop a clear organisational strategy while strengthening their governance, operations and administration. In this story, Vice Coordinator, Chouchouna Losale describes how this work led to the network being more effective at ensuring women’s participation.**

“Well Grounded helped us to have a solid foundation which has urged several partners to seek to collaborate with us”.

These are the words of Chouchouna Losale, Vice Coordinator in Charge of Programmes for the Coalition of Female Leaders for the Environment and Sustainable Development (CFLEDD). CFLEDD is a network of women and women’s organisations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

According to Losale, CFLEDD is a well-established and credible organisation thanks to the support of Well Grounded.

“The support from Well Grounded that made the biggest impression on the organisation was the fact that the [organisation] was put on



*Chouchouna Losale*

a firm footing; enabling the organisation to be credible... We had our feet in the air. We didn’t really have any institutional frameworks and policies that could help us... to be seen elsewhere,” she adds.

### Key Information

**Country: Democratic Republic of Congo**

### Period of collaboration

**CFLEDD collaborated with Well Grounded from 2017 to 2020.**

### Domains of collaboration

**Well Grounded supported CFLEDD to conduct an organisational diagnosis, reflect on and develop a strategy, harness the leadership potential of key staff and develop key policy documents such as the organisation’s procedures manual.**



*Collaboratively, [Well Grounded] identified the capacity gaps faced by the organisation and worked with the team at CFLEDD's secretariat to design strategies to address these challenges.*

According to Losale, "... [Well Grounded] came to sit us down, equip us, give us skills, capacities, and that has made us to be well-structured today, and to be a model to support civil society".

Losale happily points out that CFLEDD's team acquired skills in strategy development, planning and evaluation, leadership and organisational governance, to name a few.

As organisational development facilitators, Well Grounded guided CFLEDD to conduct an organisational diagnosis. Collaboratively, they identified the capacity gaps faced by the organisation and worked with the team at CFLEDD's secretariat to design strategies to address these challenges.

This resulted in an organisation that currently has a well-defined strategy, robust policies, is credible, attracts institutional partners and stands as a reference gender-focused organisation in the country.

### **CFLEDD is more focused**

Losale laments about their early-day struggles as an organisation. "Previously, we never had

an organisational strategy. We did not have job descriptions, and we did everything", she says.

These issues were addressed progressively after they took part in organisational development processes with Well Grounded between 2017 and 2019.

"When we were established, we worked in an ad hoc manner. We did not have a strategic plan. Well Grounded accompanied us in developing a five-year strategy which is guiding our work. Annually, we evaluate what has been implemented, based on the strategic plan and identify where we encountered challenges and find ways to address these and work to achieve our objectives", Losale explains.

According to her, the contributions made by Well Grounded in strengthening CFLEDD enabled the organisation to define a clear vision and mission. Well Grounded's support also enhanced their operations, organisational administration and enabled them to have tools to enforce good governance practices within the organisation.

"Well Grounded really helped us", she utters with a breath of satisfaction.

The support enabled CFLEDD to have an organisational strategy, an anti-corruption policy,



*A CFLEDD workshop*

*“The gender policy has helped us to consider the expertise of both men and women, without showing favouritism. It has helped us to empower women today at provincial and community level.”*

CHOUCHOUNA LOSALE

a clear structure and job descriptions for its personnel and a gender strategy, among others.

Losale proudly affirms that CFLEDD is currently an exemplary organisation in the DRC working to promote the active participation of women and men in preserving the Congo Basin Forest.

### **A stronger CFLEDD translates to more impact for women in the DRC**

These tools and strategies developed with support from Well Grounded have greatly influenced CFLEDD to implement its activities in a more organised manner. They are capable of ensuring the active participation of both women and men in their activities. CFLEDD’s gender policy has been instrumental in this regard.

“Our gender policy clearly defines how the organs should be organised. It defines what key considerations member organisations of CFLEDD need to take into account to ensure that there is a significant representation of women and men in the implementation of their activities”, the Vice Coordinator for Programmes explains.

Additionally, according to Losale, the gender policy helped the organisation to valorise and leverage the expertise of women and men without bias.

This has boosted the participation of women and men in all CFLEDD’s interventions. In Mongala, they trained women and men to lead adaptation efforts to face climate change. They have also

designed and run a leadership programme which seeks to increase women’s participation in decision-making processes and stimulate their valuable contributions towards the effective management of natural resources in the DRC.

In all these activities and more, CFLEDD is deliberate about involving women and men; an effort which is guided by the organisation’s Gender policy which they developed with support from Well Grounded.

“The gender policy has helped us to consider the expertise of both men and women, without showing favouritism. It has helped us to empower women today at provincial and community level,” Losale reiterates.

This practice was further deepened through CFLEDD’s active participation in an Ecofeminist training and workshop retreat organised by Well Grounded for the Réseau National des Observateurs Indépendants (RENOI) in the DRC where CFLEDD is a member.

In an appraisal of how their organisational strategy has guided CFLEDD to make significant strides in giving a voice to women across the country, Losale says,

“We have realised some success because, from when we started CFLEDD, and today, we can say we have achieved some milestones in the provinces where women could not speak out. There were spaces where women were not given a voice.”

Through the leadership empowerment initiatives led by CFLEDD, women have been equipped to take up leadership positions at the provincial level and within their communities and are contributing towards the sustainable management of their natural resources. They also contribute to decision-making discourses and efforts geared towards the efficient management of natural resources in these provinces.

#### **The author**

**These stories were collected and written by Jimm Chick, an organisation development and communication specialist, based in Yaounde, Cameroon.**

