February 1, 2021

# FUELING HOPES FOR BURKINA FASO'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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*Reading time: 9 minutes*

As a land-locked country in West Africa's Sahel region, **Burkina Faso** is not necessarily one that jumps to mind when thinking about forests and climate change. But knowing that its arid and semi-arid ecosystems have high carbon sequestration potential, particularly its soil, explains why CIF selected Burkina Faso as one of the first countries to participate in its Forest Investment Program (FIP). Back in 2011, this was not an easy decision to accept for many stakeholders as the forestry sector seemed alien to Burkina Faso.

But we stood proudly by that decision because not only is more than 40% of Burkina Faso's territory covered by wooded areas, but soil and forest management and the preservation of woodlands are identified as top priorities in the country's development and poverty reduction policies. So we were very eager to visit the country and check the impact of our investments on the ground. In the next few days, we would see firsthand how CIF's efforts translate for Burkina Faso's communities.

## IMPACT ON THE GROUND

The country's commitment towards a sustainable future was made clear on our first day meeting with the team from the Ministry of Environment, Green Business, and Climate Change who are in charge of implementing the FIP projects. They explained to us how the **CIF funding is helping to lift people out of poverty while halting the factors that threaten the survival of forests and woodlands.** These trends include agricultural expansion, overgrazing, bushfires, and fuel-wood and charcoal production.

The USD 36.5 million in FIP funding provides essential support in the development and implementation of Burkina Faso's ambitious REDD+ Strategy. FIP projects are testing **four pilot models to sequester carbon and reduce emissions:**

- A policy and regulatory approach, **targeting central administration** and deconcentrated services, and local management committees of State forests.
- A decentralized approach, **targeting municipalities,** local elected officials, customary leaders, and village councilors.
- A community approach, **targeting community organizations,** SMEs, and women's groups.
- A supply-chain approach, **targeting inter-professional organizations,** cooperatives, and entrepreneurs.

By the time we met with Minister Battio Bassière, we could already tell that FIP had been transformative for his country. He reinforced the link between sustainable use of forests and development and told us that *"we have benefited from the investments of CIF, taking into account those who live around these forests to strengthen their capacities, and also to make them understand that it is important to preserve natural resources so that they can provide an income for future generations."*

We spent the next two days visiting sites where activities for three of the FIP-funded projects are implemented, in partnership with the **World Bank** and the **African Development Bank.**

Although dry **forests** may not be as productive as the dense, green tropical forests, it was instantly clear to us that **rural communities are highly dependent on them**. In fact, when we visited some communities to hear their experiences of participating in the projects, they welcomed us under the shade of a big tree!

## FROM FOREST PROTECTION TO COMMUNITY BENEFITS

**Reforestation, forest protection and management, and activities to reduce and prevent land degradation are a focus of the FIP investments** in the Oualou classified forest. Here, we met the members of the newly formed Forest Management Group. They are piloting a payment for an environmental services scheme and have received support and training to better control and fight against bush fires. As we learn about this, a young man zips past us on his bicycle talking on a mobile phone, both provided by the FIP-funded project. It turns out he is reporting on the forest conditions, ensuring there is no uncontrolled fire. Fires are not uncommon, especially since the area is popular for beekeeping. Traditionally people used to light fires to smoke colonies from the trees, leading to widespread forest fires and land degradation.

**https://youtu.be/EHaSEvuhc0M**

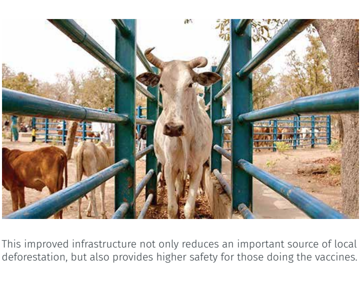
Today, with the help of CIF and a local NGO, the community has adopted modern beekeeping methods. Not only has this stopped fires, it has actually led to big returns through the increased honey production.

Other FIP-funded activities are benefiting both the environment and communities. For example, the building of stone-made dikes is preventing erosion and moisture loss, which not only affects productivity of the already stressed land, but also increases the vulnerability of local communities. Although the forests we were seeing clearly indicated that we were visiting during the dry season, *"rain run-off used to make potholes across the commune,"* Belem Salifou, Forest Officer, told us. *"We realized that if we didn't make dikes, our roads would become inaccessible."*

**https://youtu.be/e5CsUUmmgD8**

## SAFEGUARDING THE ENVIRONMENT, BENEFITING PEOPLE

In the municipality of **Sapuoy,** 100 km south of Ouagadogou the Galo community is proving how livestock is connected to preserving forests. Cattle farming is an integral element of Burkina Faso's economy and, with that, animal health becomes critically important. Vaccinating cattle is therefore critical, and used to be done in wooden-fenced 'vaccination parks' which had to be replaced periodically and did not provide the required safety measures for the people in charge of administering the vaccines. CIF provided support to replace the wooden fences with metallic ones.



This improved infrastructure not only reduces an important source of local deforestation, but also provides higher safety for those doing the vaccines.

At our next stop, we are shown how biofuel is playing an increasingly important role among the communities. Biofuel– made from organic mass – is another renewable energy enterprise that is safeguarding the environment with a multitude of potential usages. It can be converted into fuel for cooking, manure to fertilize the land, sprayed as an insecticide, or converted into natural gas.

We visited the house of SiabiOueleza, a farmer in the department of Oury, who proudly showed us his biodigestor and explained how it has improved the living standards of his family.

He was one of the first in his community to give biofuel production a try and is now a strong supporter of this technology. *"When I first prepared it by myself, I benefited from it in one year,"* he said. *"We now have light in the house. I don't need to buy batteries or fuel anymore."* Biofuel also plays a valuable role in reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

It is estimated that a single bio-digester preserves 0.33 ha of forest per year, and the FIP has promoted the establishment of more than 2,500 of them.

As we travel between locations, we see one example after another of how CIF's efforts towards protecting forests while improving livelihoods can transform communities.

**https://youtu.be/-VQw5Mr9mLI**

## EMPOWERING WOMEN

As we continued traveling across the Municipality of Sapuoy, we stopped at the market garden managed by the **NekeneDuene Women's Association.** Here we met with Kind Fatoumata, a grandmother who leads this hard-working group of women.

She mentioned that CIF provided material and staff to build a solar powered water tower to secure the vegetable production that is used for personal consumption or sale, providing the 125 women in the association with a source of income.

**https://youtu.be/kVDqVo6O8-k**

It was truly inspiring to see the plot of land neatly organized into a vegetable garden, hear from the women how they allocate the land and share the water, and learn the difference such a small vegetable garden has made in their lives. And even now, when we reflect on the difference our investment made for this community, it keeps inspiring us and drives us to do more. Water, solar power, income, food security... and yes, forest protection, as women learned to protect and care for the soil and the scarce trees.

## THE WAY FORWARD

And so, we were energized and eager to learn more about another women's cooperative, **Allah Wallou** (May God help us, so that we can help each other), that received CIF support. We meet the cooperative's leader Diallo Kadida. Another life-changing project. Diallo tells us that local women had no income and it was nearly impossible for them to find any source of income. But now, they all work there three times a week and earn a salary to support their families. Not only did the CIF supply the funds and the material to set up the cooperative, but it also supplied training to all the women to safeguard their financial independence. While Diallo tells us how they collect milk from the local farmers, she proudly points at a sparkling clean stainless-steel container. She enthusiastically illustrates the step-by-step process to produce yogurt and a local beverage called gapal.

How they quickly transport it with their motorcycle to a different location, where they own a fridge, as they will distribute it to customers later on, once bottled. We cannot describe Diallo's pride when she was talking to us. The women around her were radiant and equally proud and conscious of how supportive of their families they have become, considering themselves as an integral part of the community.

**https://youtu.be/m83prV6q1gw**

But CIF didn't stop at establishing a women's cooperative that employs all the women in the village and makes them financially independent... CIF provides training to make sure they learn sustainable agricultural practices to help preserve the scarce forest resources. In particular, they hear about research showing the protein-packed fruits of the Moringa oleifeira tree can be fed to dairy cows to produce a good quantity and quality of milk. This includes better management of the protein-packed fruits of the Moringa oleifeira tree, which are fed to dairy cows to improve the quantity and quality of milk production. *"No woman is going to cut a tree anymore,"* Dialla explains *"because now we all know the importance of trees!".*

## MAKING PEOPLE COUNT

During three days of a very packed schedule, we saw that the initiatives piloted by the CIF can show the way forward for Burkina Faso to make a transformational change in its rural development. We gained a better understanding of how the highly participatory approach of engaging local communities and all relevant stakeholders in project design and implementation can benefit the environment, climate, and people.

We left the country impressed with the number of integrated and complementary activities that were in place. We were even more impressed by the commitment from central and local Government officials and communities to make a difference in their country's development and in improving people's lives. They are showing the world why countries such as Burkina Faso need to be further supported at a much higher scale to be able to replicate these very impactful investments into so many other parts of this Sahelian region. Having met them and been inspired by their energy, we urge the world to listen.