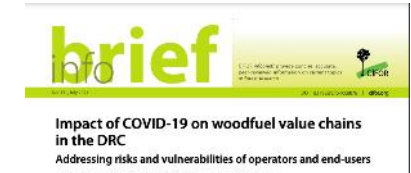


Study on impact of COVID-19 on woodfuel value chains in the DRC

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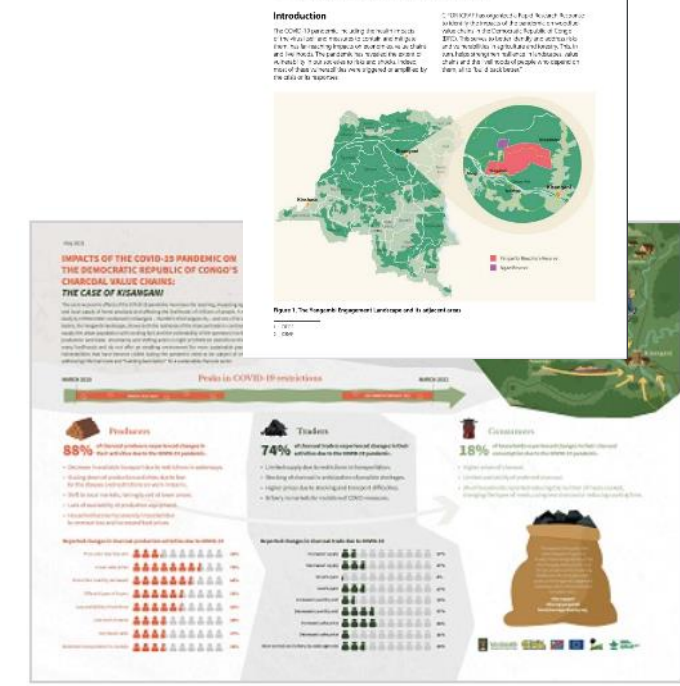
Objectives

- To identify the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the operators and end-users of woodfuel value chains in the supply zone near the Yangambi Biosphere Reserve and in Kisangani city
- To identify potential actions to address these impacts

Methodology

Data collection from December 2020 to March 2021:

- Surveys with a total of 384 operators (producers and salespersons) and 1,203 consumers of woodfuel (charcoal).
- Semi-structured interviews with 14 key informants.
- Collection of secondary data and relevant documents on specific restrictions due to COVID-19.



COVID-19 makes it harder for charcoal producers and traders to make ends meet

Study explores ripple effects of the pandemic on forest livelihoods

DANIELLA SILVA



Key findings



Producers

88% of charcoal producers experienced changes in their activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Decrease in available transport due to restrictions in waterways.
- Scaling down of production activities due to fear for the disease and restrictions on work in teams.
- Shift to local markets, having to sell at lower prices.
- Lack of availability of production equipment.
- Household economy severely impacted due to revenue loss and increased food prices.



Traders

74% of charcoal traders experienced changes in their activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Limited supply due to restrictions in transportation.
- Stocking of charcoal in anticipation of possible shortages.
- Higher prices due to stocking and transport difficulties.
- Bribery in markets for violation of COVID measures.



Consumers

18% of households experienced changes in their charcoal consumption due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Higher prices of charcoal.
- Limited availability of preferred charcoal.
- 3% of households reported reducing the number of meals cooked, changing the types of meals, using less charcoal or reducing cooking time.



The charcoal sector has shown resilience in continuing to supply cooking fuel to Kisangani's urban population, but with changing providers (ad hoc) and shifting supply areas (with less controls).

The COVID-19 pandemic amplified negative impacts to those who are most dependent on charcoal trade.



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Conclusions

Operators in woodfuel value chains are part of the large ‘forgotten group’ of informal workers who have not received any government support during the pandemic.

Established informal mechanisms used by producers, such as rotational working groups and sales to known traders, were disrupted, leaving producers in a more vulnerable situation.

COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions negatively impacted conducive environment for sustainable charcoal production.



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Recommendations

Affected groups must be supported to sustain their activities during and after the pandemic in sustainable ways.

The government could suspend small daily taxes to local entities.

Organized group transport to marketplaces to avoid the unnecessary movement of many small-scale transporters and the associated bribery.

This support should target producer groups that intend to supply charcoal sustainably.

These proposed reforms are important steps for the sustainable charcoal sector to “build back better.”



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