

Improvement and implementation of the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and development of a framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo's National Zero Net Greenhouse Gas Action Plan.

Summary report of the workshop held on March 26-27, 2025, Dakar, Senegal

Facilitated by Woodwell Climate Research Center and the Ministère de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable de la RDC

This workshop was sponsored by Woodwell Climate Research Centers' own funds and with the support of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

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ACRONYMS	
GROUND FLOOR	DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
PNSD	NATIONAL STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN
GHG	Greenhouse gases
CDN	Contribution Determined at National Level
CNCC	National Council for Climate Change
MEDD	Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development
DDD	Sustainable Development Department
CDN 3.0	CDN-RDC version 3
AFAT	Agriculture, forestry and other land uses
BAU	Business As Usual (a basic scenario, as usual)
CdP	Conference of the Parties
PNZ	Net Zero action plan
NbCS	Nature-based Climate Solutions
PSE	Payment for Environmental Services
ARMCA	Carbon Market Regulation Authority
FVC	Green Climate Fund
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, UK Government
NICFI	Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative
PTC	Concertation Platform (Climate Change Department)

Executive summary

Context and background : The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is committed to combating climate change and promoting sustainable development, as outlined in its National Strategic Development Plan (PNSD). The DRC aims to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 21% by 2030, focusing on four sectors: Energy, Agriculture, Forestry, Other Land Use and Waste. This effort is in line with the global commitments made under the Paris Agreement, and the DRC is ready to revise its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in 2025, by submitting its third version. This revision of the DRC's NDC will require the involvement of various stakeholders, including ministries, public institutions, civil society and academic entities, to ensure smooth and successful implementation and improved data quality on GHG stock and flux in different land-use classes.

Net Zero Plan and CDN: The Net Zero Plan aims to guide a country towards achieving zero emissions by a specific year, based on the CDN within the framework of the Paris Agreement. Achieving net zero emissions can reduce the impacts of climate change, improve air quality, promote green industries and improve public health. A Net Zero declaration would place the DRC among the leaders of climate policy in Africa and could strengthen international collaborations, particularly with regard to forest conservation and ecosystem restoration, drawing on the experiences of countries such as Brazil and Indonesia.

Workshop objectives: The aim of the workshop was to discuss the creation of a working model for a low-carbon, carbon market-based development strategy in the DRC. This strategy aims to focus on the protection of carbon stock, biodiversity and ecosystem services. The aim was to :

1. Strengthen NDC review and implementation processes.
2. Identify the scientific and technical resources required.
3. Facilitate the cross-sectoral integration of NDC into national development processes.

Challenges identified in the implementation of version 2 of the NDC: The implementation of version 2 of the NDC of the DRC faces several difficulties, namely:

- Weak legal frameworks and institutional capacities.
- Inadequate coordination and data sharing between stakeholders.
- Ambitious emission reduction targets (21% reduction by 2030).
- Lack of funding and awareness at local and provincial levels.

The workshop focused on solutions such as improving governance structures, setting up robust monitoring systems, improving data collection and mobilizing financial resources to achieve NDC objectives.

Main conclusions and recommendations: The workshop highlighted three main areas for improvement:

1. Governance and policy management: Establish an operational framework for cross-sectoral coordination, under the leadership of a National Climate Change Council (NCCC), and integration of climate policy into national development plans.
2. Carbon accounting and budgeting: Develop credible data standards for measuring emissions and ecosystem services to support transparent and effective reporting on climate performance.

3. Cross-sectoral integration: Promoting emissions reductions across all sectors through collaborative partnerships, particularly in the field of climate-smart agriculture and carbon payment mechanisms.

Next steps and future actions: The success of the "Net Zero" plan will depend on data quality, which remains a major gap. It is in this context that the workshop highlighted the importance of establishing effective data systems, building stakeholder capacity and aligning the NDC with other GHG emissions reduction initiatives. The DRC's transition to a low-carbon economy can be supported by international partnerships and funding, such as the CAFI initiative, and by the engagement of local and global stakeholders in implementing solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Woodwell Climate Research Center, a key partner in the DRC's climate efforts, will continue to play a vital role in supporting the country's transition to a low-carbon future, including through its involvement in project development and fundraising efforts.

Conclusion: The DRC is actively working to improve its climate strategies, with a focus on achieving sustainable development through effective emissions reduction, data management and international cooperation. The results of this workshop have laid the foundations for improving the NDC and implementing a robust Zero Net Emissions Plan for greenhouse gases, with the potential to position the DRC as a regional leader in climate policy.

1.0 Background

The DRC government's objectives include combating climate change and creating the conditions for low-carbon, sustainable development, as set out in its PNSD, whose 5th strategic axis focuses on environmental protection, combating climate change and sustainable, balanced development. Like all countries that have ratified the Paris Agreement, the DRC had to revise its NDC in 2025 in order to raise its ambitions and submit a third version of this international commitment. The DRC, through the MEDD under its Direction de Développement Durable (DDD), submitted a first version of this document in 2015, followed by a revision in 2021, and entrusted the Division Changement Climatique with the task of improving the CDN-RDC version 2 and its implementation, which will be presented as CDN-RDC version 3 (CDN 3.0).

The DRC's NDC 3.0 still aims to reduce GHG emissions by 21% by 2030, with quantified targets for the Energy, Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFAT), and Waste sectors. Given its cross-cutting nature, the improvement and implementation of its NDC requires the promotion of a framework for cross-sectoral consultation and coordination, through multi-stakeholder meetings between various stakeholders such as public institutions and sectoral ministries, notably the MEDD, the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development, Energy, Hydrocarbons, Mining, Land Use Planning, Infrastructure, Transport, Planning, Finance, as well as universities and civil society, to ensure their mobilization and involvement in the various stages of improvement and implementation of previously identified interventions. It should be noted the DRC has therefore chosen to maintain its ambition of a 21% reduction in GHG emissions compared with the BAU (Business As Usual) reference level by 2030 (650 GtCO₂ of GHG to be avoided) for its version 3.0, and to focus its efforts on improving the quality of emission data, as well as the implementation of its objectives.

1.1 What is a Net Zero plan and how does it relate to CDN?

The Net Zero Plan guides a country's transition to zero greenhouse gas emissions by a specific year. It is based on CDN's, under the Paris Agreement, in accordance with its Article 4 and more specifically 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6, 4.8, 4.9, 4.11 and 4.17. The aim of Net Zero is to reduce carbon emissions to a level that nature and other carbon dioxide removal measures can absorb and store, leaving no trace in the atmosphere. A national "net zero" plan thus offers considerable benefits, including mitigating climate change, improving air quality, stimulating economic growth through green industries, and improving public health by reducing pollution and the effects of extreme weather. As a statement of political intent and a strategic framework for management and operational implementation, it provides an important signal to market players, creating demand for low-carbon technologies and services, encouraging innovation, attracting investment in sustainable industries and enhancing brand reputation, ultimately leading to a more resilient and competitive economy.

Drawing up a Net Zero plan will place the DRC among the leaders of climate policy on the African continent, and could be the first country in the Congo Basin to declare its intention to do so. As of October 2022, only four African countries had formally committed to Net Zero: Liberia, Nigeria, South Africa and South Sudan, while Benin and Madagascar have declared their intention to achieve Net Zero. In addition, the launch of a Net Zero process could offer the DRC the opportunity to forge closer relationships by learning from the experiences of Brazil and Indonesia under the Tripartite Agreement on the Sustainable Management, Conservation and Restoration of Tropical Forests and Critical Ecosystems. Brazil has already launched its Net Zero process and intends to declare its objectives at COP 30 in Belem.

2.0 Workshop objectives

The development of a working model in the DRC for achieving low-emission development, financed by markets and other payment-for-performance mechanisms aimed at protecting carbon, biodiversity and ecosystem services, can pave the way for similar initiatives throughout the Congo Basin.

The Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP) will enable sustainable economic growth while reducing the considerable risks associated with climate change. Stronger NDCs, supported by a clear strategy and NZP () across government, will help guide investment, attract climate finance and ensure transparency and accountability. The NZP can also define ways to support communities likely to be affected by zero-carbon development, including job creation, worker retraining and social safety nets. More than 90% of the DRC's greenhouse gas emissions come from the AFFAT sector. Addressing the complex social and economic issues associated with land management, and developing an investment framework for low-emission development on the scale of Nature-Based Climate Solutions (NbCS), are at the heart of the national mitigation and adaptation strategy and the fulfillment of commitments made under the NDC.

This will require A) encouraging national structural and technological change, based on equitable participation and shared opportunities in society; and B) protecting, managing and restoring the national biological heritage. Global capital for the necessary investments is available, and the potential for innovation is vast. What is needed is strong political leadership and credible, coherent policies to put in place a comprehensive government strategy to adopt and implement the principles of the green economy. The economic, social and environmental contextual challenges and opportunities are well established, along with the relevant policy context in the country's Climate and Development Report (World Bank, 2023).

2.1 How can economic growth and poverty reduction be reconciled with climate and environmental objectives?

A green economy strategy should propose an action plan with 8 priority action points, across government, which coordinate with the National Strategic Development Plan, namely:

1. Accelerate low-carbon transformation by integrating climate issues into key economic decision-making processes, revising and updating the poverty reduction and growth strategy as part of the national sustainable development planning and budgeting process in preparation and management of the PNSD;
2. Strengthen NDC commitments and the policy management framework for the carbon market, by investing in the development of national reporting standards, improved science to objectively measure, report and verify system-wide GHG performance in , and digital architecture to share performance metrics with stakeholders;
3. Develop NbCS-based climate solutions to protect, manage and restore biodiversity, primary forests, peatlands and wetland landscapes (including croplands), by strengthening long-term investment incentives, e.g. financial guarantees on NbCS credits, to increase international financing progressively linked to the social benefits of landscapes, ecosystem functions and emissions performance targets ;
4. Develop clear operational standards and a compliance framework for NbCS credits and other structural financial mechanisms based on payment by results;

5. Prioritize investment in a just transition to renewable energies, and think critically about the long- and short-term economic, social and environmental trade-offs involved in exploiting national resources of fossil fuels, agricultural inputs and managing urbanization;
6. Increase innovation in key low-carbon and climate-resilient technologies, by increasing public investment in clean energy R&D and removing barriers to entrepreneurship and creativity;
7. Significantly reduce the cost of capital for low-carbon infrastructure investments, by broadening access to institutional capital and reducing the costs of low-carbon assets; Make connected and compact cities the preferred form of urban development, by encouraging better management of urban growth and prioritizing investments in efficient and safe public transport systems and key climate-proof infrastructure, prioritizing improved landscape management measures in the interests of people and nature.

The aim of the workshop was to initiate high-level discussions between experts from the DRC and Woodwell Climate Research Center, which is a MEDD partner on these technical issues, with a view to developing a project to support the process of improving NDC version 2 and its implementation as NDC version 3 in the DRC in order to support sustainable development.

More specifically, it involves :

- Laying the foundations for technical support to improve and implement the NDC;
- Specify and identify the needs of the Sustainable Development Department to enable it to carry out its mission;
- Identify the scientific resources needed to integrate the data required to improve and implement the NDC;
- Define the resources needed to improve and implement the NDC.
- Integrating NDC into national development processes and cross-sectoral engagement

3.0 Workshop execution and results

The workshop began by identifying the problems and challenges encountered during the implementation of CDN Version 2. These are (from):

- Weak implementation of the legal framework ;
- Weak institutional and organizational capacity ;
- Aligning key players in favor of the climate ;
- Insufficient coordination between sectoral ministries;
- Insufficient information sharing between stakeholders;
- Lack of a common methodology for centralizing and updating existing data;
- Lack of awareness of CDN at provincial and local levels;
- The overly ambitious target of a 21% reduction (650 Gt CO₂ eq compared with BAU reference emissions);
- Insufficient mobilization of funds.

The workshop also identified various possible solutions for improving and implementing NDC 3.0, in terms of governance projects, MRV activities, mitigation and adaptation measures, in order to put in place a coherent legal and institutional framework, data collection activities (identification, updating, validation and data security) and mobilization of the funds needed to achieve the objectives set for NDC v.2¹

3.1 Key findings

Three main areas of intervention have been identified to operationalize the 8 action points listed above:

1. **Net Zero Governance and Policy Management** : This area focuses on establishing an operational architecture for internal and cross-sectoral policy coordination and management, through the nascent CNCC. In particular, it will address the need to clearly establish the "Net Zero" program in the national sustainable development plan as the overarching policy dictating the national medium-term expenditure framework and budget.
2. **Standards and criteria for carbon accounting and budgeting**: Measurement and reporting of emissions and other associated ecosystem services (co-benefits) are essential to the definition and credible reporting of NDC, to performance management under PES approaches and to the development of credible carbon credit markets. This area will concern the development of technical and managerial capacity to create pragmatic and credible data standards, define the boundaries of GHG accounting (internal or external), collect accurate and high-quality national source data (gradual transition from Tier 1 to Tier 3 emission factors), data certification to transparently report methods and errors, and the national accountability and third-party verification system for carbon auditing.
3. **Cross-sectoral integration of Net Zero**: Integrating Net Zero objectives into sectoral development plans requires a multi-faceted approach, including setting ambitious targets, reducing emissions across all sectors and promoting collaboration between stakeholders to achieve a sustainable, low-carbon future. Actions will be implemented through partnerships with related ministries, to deploy techniques such as climate-smart agriculture, and mechanisms such as Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) , which both adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.

4.0 Discussion and next steps

At the heart of the process are the essential data needed to set targets for "Net Zero" and to assess performance; without appropriate data at national level, this objective cannot be achieved. The workshop identified challenges to the implementation of the NDC-DRC, as well as possible solutions, such as capacity-building for stakeholders, the development of indicators to verify targets, cross-sectoral coordination, the alignment of the NDC with other GHG reduction initiatives in the AFAT sector, the development of a communication plan, including the identification of tools and channels for transmitting information, and the development of a carbon neutrality plan. These solutions have been identified as priority technical and administrative activities.

To understand the issues presented in this specific context. For example, the Kivu-Kinshasa Green Corridor initiative is a new strategic approach to conservation that adopts a green economy (low-emission development) framework to achieve natural landscape protection goals alongside human development objectives at both microscopic and macroscopic scales; a welcome change in the view of workshop participants. The strategy seeks to harness the global energy around finding nature-based climate solutions by using global payment-for-performance financing mechanisms, e.g. carbon and biodiversity markets, and sub-national market-based approaches to mobilize this capital from landscape actors through payments for ecosystem services. The initiative will require hundreds of millions of USD over several decades to extend its impact to the millions of rural households involved in its mobilization, a sum unimaginable for the public purse; the first means of support will necessarily be private capital. As far as global private capital markets are concerned, even if the DRC aims to develop synergies with our sister tropical forest nations, in an open market there will always be an element of competition as to which sovereign carbon markets to invest in. The urgency of developing a governance and transparency framework has never been greater: there is virtually no nationally appropriate data to prove the "performance" of environmental systems on the basis of which payments could be made. Without high-quality environmental data, with known errors, from a recognized and reliable source, it is difficult to negotiate a contract fairly, or to obtain stakeholder agreement on the extent to which obligations have been met, and on which to base a payment.

Success should therefore prioritize long-term commitment to education, organization and governance as a platform for growth. In the context of NDC and Net Zero planning, this means operationalizing key government organizations and institutions such as CNCC, PTC and ARMCA to fully fulfill their policy management roles, and mobilizing the national scientific community to address data needs. Woodwell has been working in the DRC for over ten years to find solutions to the problems associated with the adverse consequences of climate change, through its technical capacity in biophysical research and capacity building. It remains an important partner in supporting the DRC in mobilizing the funds needed to implement the new-generation NDC. Next steps include broader inter-ministerial consultation at political and technical level, engagement of decentralized authorities and wider consultation of non-governmental stakeholders (indigenous populations and local community leaders, private sector players in the real economy and representatives of the financial industry). The aim of the consultation is to further develop a workable operational framework to build the confidence needed to implement pay-for-performance mechanisms to build a green economy.

We will need to seek additional funding to support this initiative. It is in this context that in 2022, Woodwell, with the approval and support of the MEDD, had submitted a project concept note for CAFI funding, and this project concept note has been accepted by CAFI from which it awaits funding

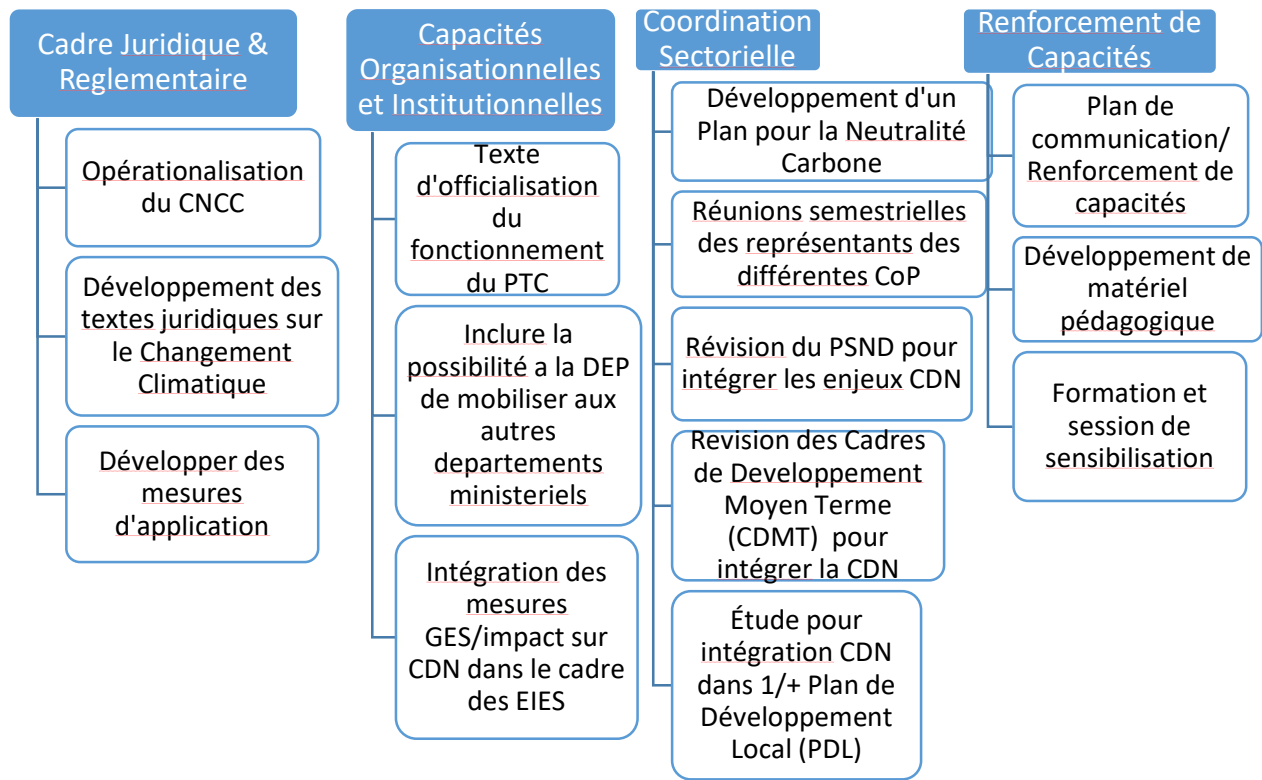
disbursement procedures in order to support the MEDD in its efforts to combat climate change and promote carbon neutrality. Currently, Woodwell is preparing three project concept notes to respond to the call for projects launched by FCDO, NICFI and FVC, the idea of submitting the project concept note is to contribute to the improvement of the NDC and its effective implementation through the activities that were identified during this workshop Mainly to support the operationalization of the CNCC and ARMCA. As of the closing date of this final workshop report (April 4, 2025), Woodwell has already responded to the stage 1 calls for proposals issued by the FCDO and NICFI

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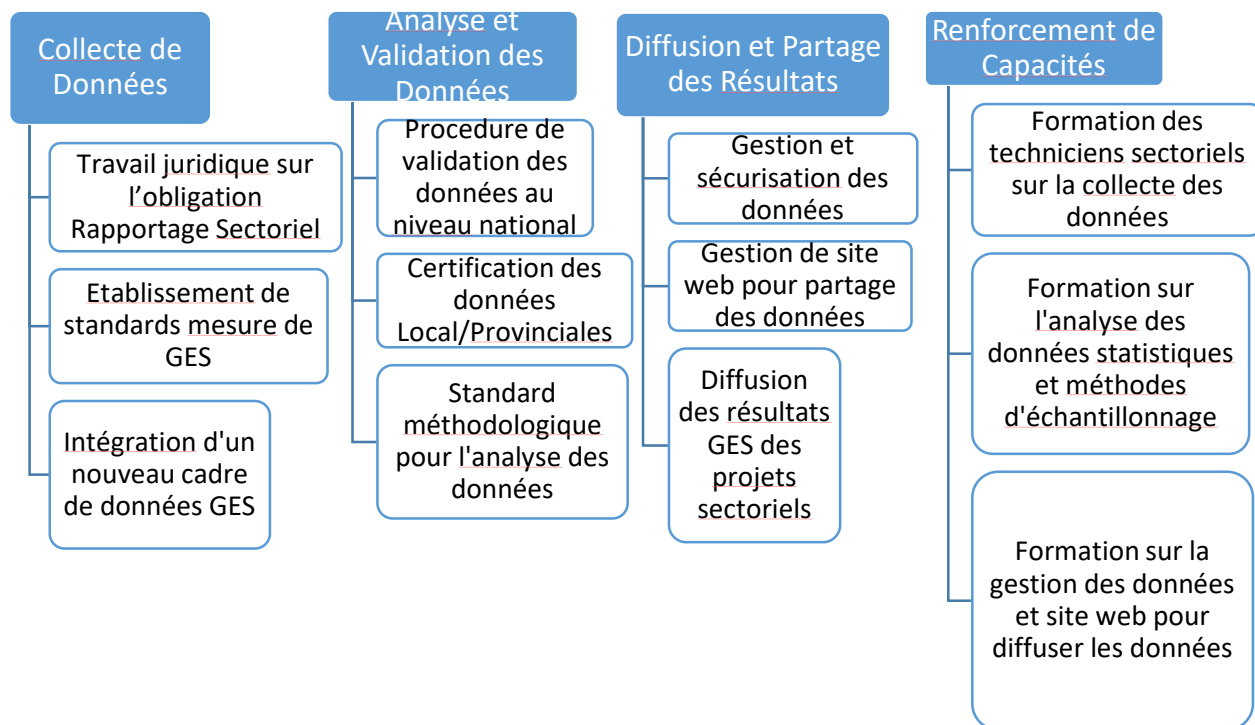
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APPENDIX 1 - Objective tree analysis of key areas and activities to operationalize the "Net Zero" national performance management framework.

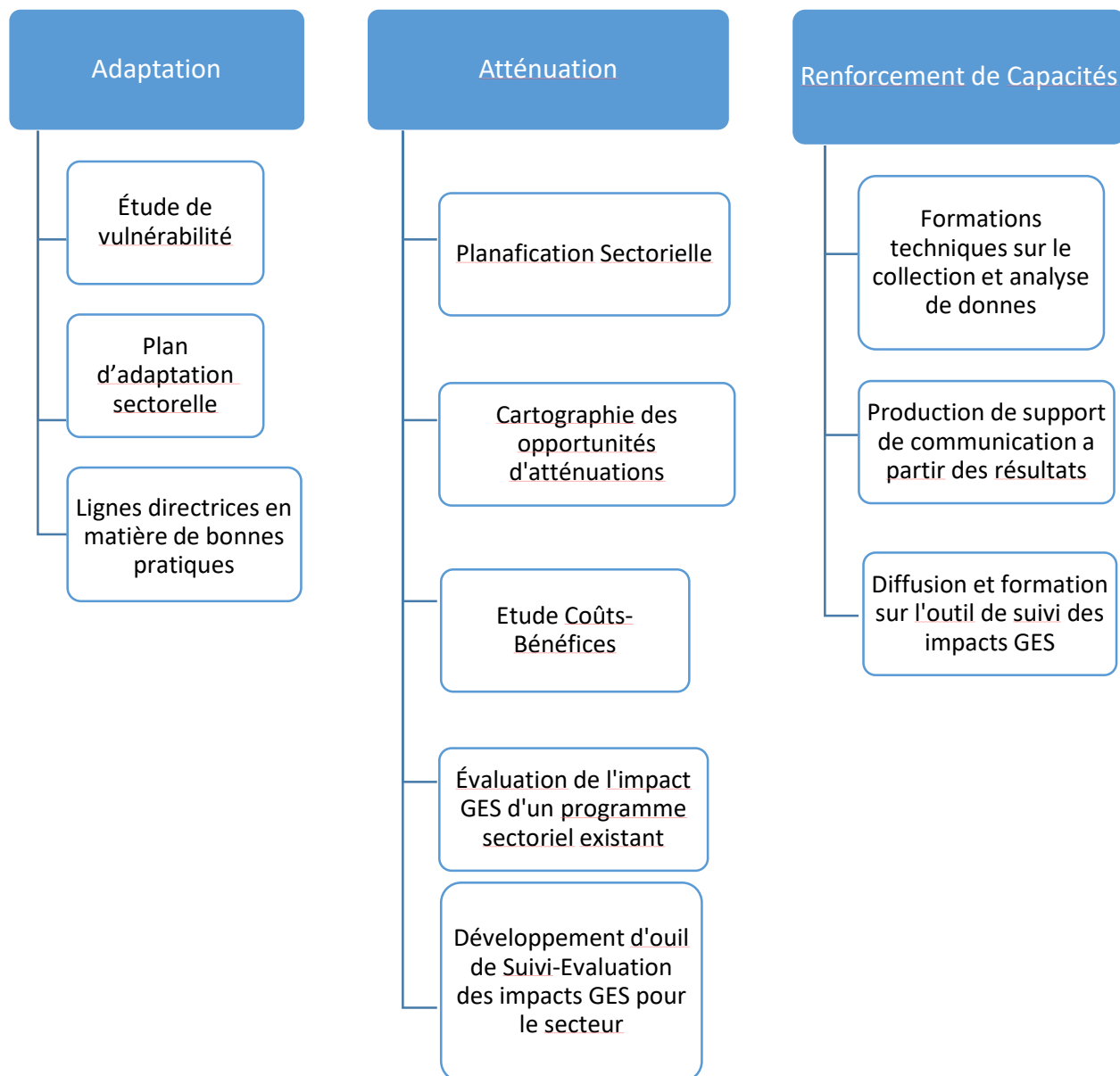
1) Net Zero governance and policy management



2) Standards and criteria for carbon accounting and budgeting



3) Cross-sector integration of net zero



APPENDIX 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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Appendix 3 - Workshop photos



From left to right: M. Melaine Kermarc, M. Joseph Zambo, Prof. Onesphore Mutshail, M. Aimé Mbuyi, Dr. Glenn Bush. Independence Square, Dakar (March 27, 2025)

