

Case Study 3 - The Role of Alternative Livelihoods in Conservation : Lessons Learned from the Lakolama Area of the Salonga-Lukenie-Sankuru Landscape

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Introduction

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Private Agencies Collaborating Together (PACT) and the Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM) created a consortium in 2006 to collaborate within the Salonga-Lukenie-Sankuru Landscape, on the basis of an agreement signed between USAID-CARPE and WWF, the lead organization. Other partners joined later to reinforce the team, including the International Conservation and Education Foundation (INCEF) and a local organization, the Institut Africain pour le Développement Economique et Social (INADES).

PACT is focusing on capacity building in civil society organizations (CSOs), and on setting up grassroots governance structures and other networks in order to forge links between the government, the private sector and CSOs in a bid to promote social, economic and environmental justice through the creation of Community-Based

Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) zones.

The first pilot zone in the Salonga-Lukenie-Sankuru Landscape to be selected by PACT was the Lokolama sector. The choice of this sector was influenced by the findings of the socio-economic surveys and biological inventories carried out in this area by various partners. The Lokolama sector is part of the vast Oshwe Territory in the Bandundu Province. This sector can be accessed over land from Oshwe (about 176 km away), by water from the port on the Lokoro River that runs through to Inongo (in Lokolama) and by air, landing at Mimia (see Figure 1). The Lokoro Rivers I and II are the biggest in the region. Other smaller rivers that irrigate the region include the Basangi, Bosimani, Ibeke, Itume, Lolama, Luenge, Lulo and Yetele.

The Nkundus make up 79 percent of the population in the Lokolama sector. The other tribes are Batwa (17 percent), Yasa (2 percent) and others (Nganda, Bolongo, Mbambo and Nkulu – 2 per-

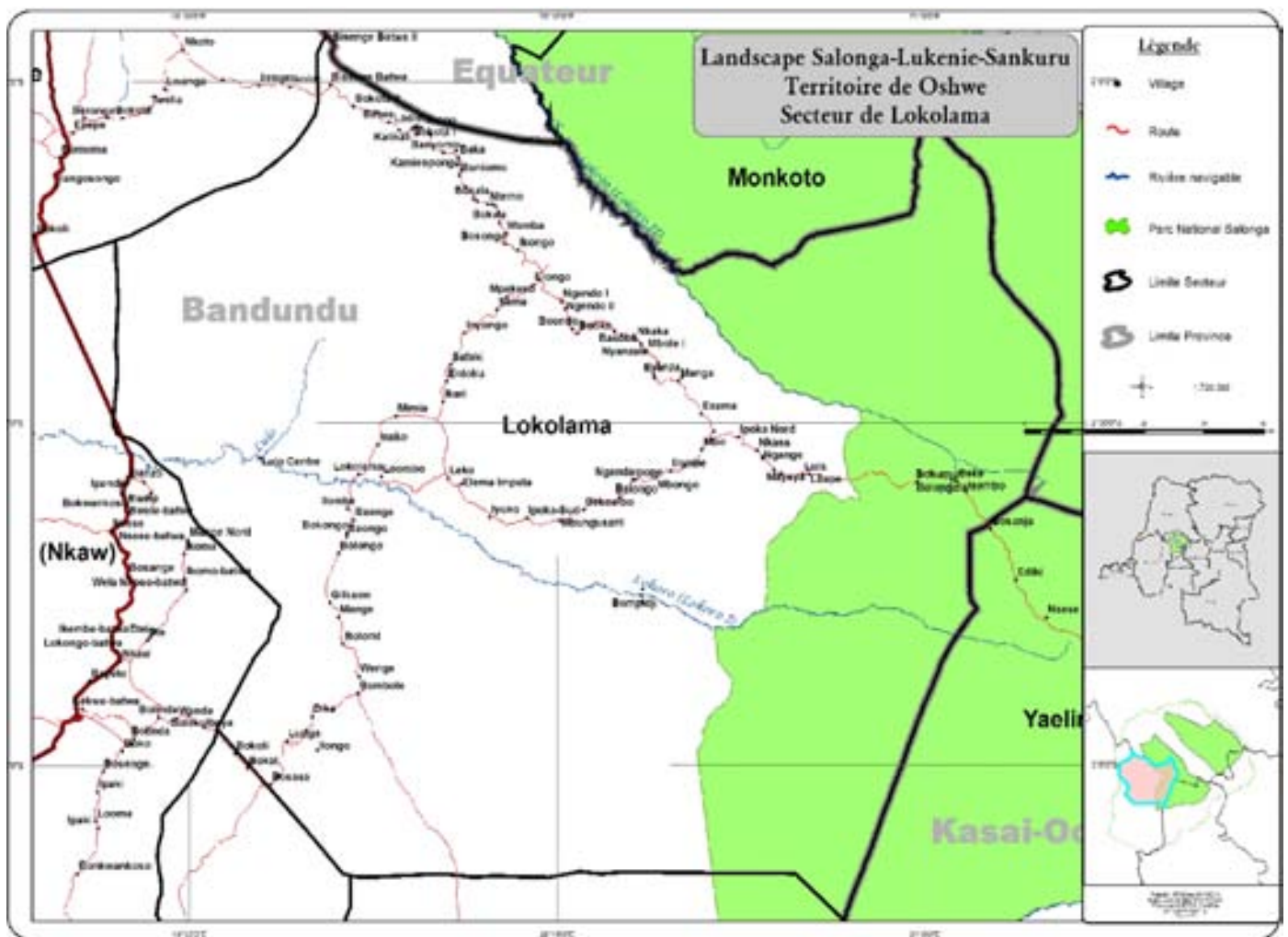


Figure 1. Map of the Lokolama sector, in the Salonga-Lukenie-Sankuru Landscape

cent in total)¹. Migration is negligible, but from time to time groups identified rightly or wrongly as hunters may settle in villages for a long period of time.

The rare permanent structures that exist are buildings abandoned by colonialists, or those belonging to the Protestant Mission or the Catholic Church. Most other houses are built with mud bricks and have thatched roofs.

In order to satisfy their essential needs, the local people have developed survival mechanisms on a day-to-day basis and, under these conditions, the conservation of natural resources becomes difficult. They have no other choice but to systematically, and often destructively, exploit biodiversity, leading to the inevitable disappearance of

some species and the further impoverishment of the indigenous peoples, who are already living in sub-human conditions.

Farming is the major subsistence activity amongst the local population but farming techniques are outdated. They practise slash-and-burn agriculture which gives poor yields per unit of land and leads to a rapid loss of soil fertility, because fire destroys the flora and fauna essential for the fertilization, aeration and conservation of soil over a long period. They practise this type of farming because it is easy – everything is consumed in the twinkling of an eye and in no time at all, there are large bare arable areas, ready to be used. The loss of fertility forces them to abandon the land every 18 months, leaving fallow land that is not fit to be used again for 10

¹ Colom, A. 2006. The Socioeconomic Aspects of Natural Resource Use and Management by Local Communities in the Salonga-Lukenie-Sankuru Landscape: Guidelines for Conservation and Livelihood Improvement. Unpublished report prepared for WWF-Democratic Republic of Congo.

years or more. Thus deforestation advances and the amount of fallow land continues to increase every year.

Hunting has always been practised mostly for subsistence. As a result of the economic slump and the war, public infrastructure, especially roads, have deteriorated. The lack of roads has isolated the sector and made transportation very difficult, if not impossible. The occasional whalers that dock at Lokolama Port once or twice a year charge local producers exorbitant prices to transport their produce to the big markets (Inongo, Kinshasa,...). For example, a farmer has to pay about US\$ 30 to get a bag of beans from Lokolama to Kinshasa before facing innumerable obstacles and harassments on the way. This situation has caused traders to give up and has discouraged local producers. Farmers no longer produce anything because there are no buyers, and traders no longer call because production has stopped: it is a vicious circle.

This explains why hunting has become so important and is now the primary income-generating activity even though it has a negative impact on biological diversity. Prospective trading networks for bushmeat have been established in Oshwe, Kikwit, Tshikapa and even Kinshasa. The meat is transported on bicycles, known as matinda locally. This small trade yields enough income for those practising it, but because of the long distances being covered, many cases of illness and sometimes even death are reported. One final point with regard to hunting – around Bisengebatwa village there are a significant number of poachers armed with automatic rifles, adding to the level and impact of hunting in the sector.

Fishing occurs on a small scale. Farmers practise line, net and bow-net fishing. Women fish using a technique locally called *écopage* or “emptying” that consists of diverting the river from its normal course. Once the fish have been deprived of water, all the women have to do is scoop them up. This technique is detrimental to the restocking of fish in the rivers because it does not spare young fish. It could also be one of the causes of a decline in water resources.

Alternative livelihoods methodology and results achieved

Methodology

Taking the living conditions of the grassroots communities (communautés de base or COBAs) into consideration is one of the determining factors in the success or failure of the entire process of natural resource management in the Lokolama sector. It is necessary to reconcile conservation and development objectives because the local population is entirely dependent on the resources surrounding them.

The development of alternative projects is a response to the needs of rural households and a way of preventing bad management of natural resources. It also encourages the COBAs to become more involved in, and motivated by, the overall process, thereby ensuring the viability of their taking on the sustainable and rational management of natural resources.

The methodology used in identifying alternative livelihoods is the accelerated method of participatory research, the AMPR. The use of AMPR tools makes it possible for rural communities to define their problems themselves, to classify them according to strategic areas (social, economic, ecological, etc.), to seek solutions together, and to prioritize them in order to arrive at a CAP or Community Action Plan.

At this point, alternative projects are identified and may be implemented after preparing a project document and/or a sectoral analysis detailing data needs.

In 2007, 30 villages in the sector began the process of drawing up a land-use plan or simple management plan (SMP).

If the CAP is a plan that is intended to satisfy the needs of grassroots communities in terms of development, the SMP is the final document that complements this plan with aspects of conservation, which will include a map of the area showing the zones designated for the various economic and conservation activities identified by the com-

munity. It is a kind of spatialization of problems and solutions, which enables communities to make the link between conservation and their living conditions, and highlights the need for rational and sustainable management of the natural resources that they rely upon for their livelihoods.

In practice, this is done using a methodology that does not necessarily follow a sequential and chronological order, but that takes into consideration the realities on the ground. The following sections provide a summary of the essential stages :

Livelihood analysis and gender analysis

This entails identifying the economic activities carried out by local communities and then determining the proportion of people who practise each activity according to gender and to group, in order to define principal and secondary activities in the village. Data are collected during workshops or during working sessions with focal groups. Analysis of this data provides an overview of the local economy and shows up the level of reliance of this economy on the outside world while highlighting the possibilities of vertical and horizontal integration with nearby economies, i.e., the economies of the areas in their immediate vicinity, in order to determine actions to be undertaken to improve their living conditions. Analysis of all the data gathered will allow the general strategy to be refined to deal with specific needs, such as those of women and vulnerable groups.

Surveys of prospective trading networks

A survey of prospective trading networks in the region can help identify potential sustainable economic activities. The first step is a brief description of the consumers, producers/processers, traders, transporters and markets in the area. This approach provides an opportunity to intervene at various links in the chain of a sector to allow more people to benefit from added value. The aim is to try and solve the problems of governance or power relations within the sector, and achieve complementarity between the various levels and categories of participants. In general, buyers and transporters have a comparative advantage over local producers. Structuring the lat-

ter into associations or networks ensures sound management of community affairs and, by using collaborative strategies, fundamental imbalances can be avoided. For example, one strategy is setting up contract-based markets. This allows the various parties to be protected from seasonal variations in prices and acts as a safeguard for local producers against arbitrary and unfair trading, as each party stands to gain from the transaction.

Drawing up community action plans (CAPs)

The most suitable tool for drawing up a CAP is the problem tree. Drawing a problem tree makes it possible to detect problems, as well as cause-and-effect relations between problems. In the course of this exercise, COBAs draw a virtual tree to visualize the groups of problems and their various levels of interaction.

Using cards to help them in their brainstorming sessions, the communities identify all the possible problems, and then sort those that are similar into the same column. At the end of the exercise, there are several columns called strategic areas: health, economy, agriculture, etc. These areas are represented on the tree by the roots at the bottom and branches at the top, depending on whether they are causes or effects. There has to be consensus amongst the participants in verifying the tree from bottom to top, and in ensuring that each cause actually corresponds to each effect.

The same process is repeated for the solution tree, by turning problems into positives at all levels. The main problem is transformed into an overall objective, the causes into specific objectives and activities, and the effects into expected results.

As to determining the priority actions to be undertaken, this is done using classification into pairs.

Finally, the solution tree is transformed into a plan made up of a cross-section of all the development priorities for the village. This is the community action plan (CAP). All potential actors at the village level can use it for programming projects and funding.

After drawing up the plan, it is essential to hold a series of wrap-up meetings for the exchange and sharing of information between the village communities, officials and decision-making bodies. The plan is then amended and adopted.

Structuring COBAs

Developing alternative activities cannot be done by individual members of the communities. Appropriate community structures need to be set up that are likely to gather support upstream and channel it to a larger audience downstream. The setting up of local natural resource management communities or platforms will facilitate the creation of grassroots associations. Associations have the benefit of bringing communities together into interest groups, reducing the unit cost of production, and forming strong unions capable of defending their rights or negotiating fair prices. Of course, defending rights is made easier if the association has legal status, acquired by being officially recognized. A public association with legal status has to have adequate human, technical and financial resource management policies; an internal and external communication strategy; and procedures for conflict resolution and advocacy; in a nutshell, a governance structure that allows for the sound and transparent management of the association for the sole benefit of its members. Organizational development in the Lokolama sector has been entrusted to a local NGO, INADES.

Creating platforms

In order to avoid duplication and to ensure coordination of efforts, platforms are created not only to distribute duties but also for probable funding of CBNRM activities. The platform created in Lokolama is a discussion forum that brings together the various stakeholders who have agreed to look into the various issues surrounding the management of natural resources in an effort to come up with adequate solutions. Such platforms also make it possible to support one or more useful costs of providing resources necessary for their functioning and as the case may be; to raise funds; and to carry out advocacy with other actors.

The creation of the platform was sealed by an official document signed by all stakeholders, in which the roles, responsibilities, duties and obligations of each actor are outlined. This document is called the **responsibility charter**.

Those most involved in the CBNRM process, namely the COBAs, play an important part in the platform, both in the CBNRM and the planning processes. Their participation was made possible through the establishment of the Natural Resource Management Committees. These are autonomous self-managed legitimate democratic structures for the sustainable management of natural resources at the village level. They are normally made up of five members, democratically elected by the entire village which comes together in plenary session before the traditional ruler of the locality. They also function as spokespersons on behalf of the planning team to the COBAs and vice versa. Such a committee has been set up in each of the 30 villages.

Implementation of the alternative projects

The next step is to design, formulate, implement and monitor alternative projects outlined in the Community Action Plan. Participants in the platform commit themselves independently or in a group to carrying out the various activities.

Results achieved

Livelihood analysis and gender analysis

These analyses highlighted the major economic activities carried out by the COBAs in the Lokolama sector: predominantly agriculture, bushmeat trade, fishing while water levels are low and, to a lesser extent, trade in rare manufactured products. Almost no agricultural produce is sold outside the sector; the indigenous people are more interested in looking for bushmeat that may be sold to traders from the Kasai. There are travelling salesmen who come and go between Oshwe and Lokolama and supply the people with clothing, kerosene and some minor manufactured products.

Surveys of prospective trading networks of non-timber forest products

A survey of prospective trading networks was carried out within the sector. This enabled an exchange of information between stakeholders and the development of an integrated vision of the parameters determining current conditions. Above all, it enabled the identification of possible remedies to problems with a view to undertaking palliative measures. All the links in the coffee, maize, groundnut, copal, caterpillar, mushroom and palm oil networks were examined in detail. Further studies are currently being carried out on groundnuts and copal, with a view to their future economic potential.

Copal is one of the products considered to have potential by the survey of trading networks carried out in 2006 by PACT and WWF, within the framework of CARPE. Trade in copal flourished in the past, just like coffee, and it was handled by the private company COLEMAN. During this period, the region was even christened “Copal Congo”. The findings of the survey showed that copal could have outlets in Madagascar or in England. The existence of an external market for Monkoto and Lokolama copal is a huge bonus and an opportunity to be seized for the part it may play in the development of the communities in the Salonga-Lukenie-Sankuru Landscape. In effect, the abundance of this product and its rise in value² during this period of non-exploitation augurs well for reasonable revenues.

Conscious of this potential, COBAs are ready to begin harvesting copal. Madagascan companies have expressed their willingness to buy, but have insisted on getting the quantity and quality they want. In order to please everyone, studies are currently underway on the reliability of the market for grassroots communities and/or local NGOs and the sustainability and quality of the supply for importers. It certainly ought to be possible to establish this trade – it mainly depends on certain key factors: the organization of the COBAs, the quantity and quality of the product, the price, supply, transportation and contracting.

This activity that can be carried out by women will hopefully spur grassroots communities to protect the forest and to abandon hunting, given that hunting is only valued because it is relatively easy and because it generates income. Hunting, as mentioned earlier, has increased alarmingly since the fall in agricultural production. The killing of game will continue as long as the population does not have alternatives that can compete with or are more viable than hunting. However, trade in copal is far more beneficial in many respects.

Another way of increasing household incomes, but also, and above all, reducing pressure on natural resources, is capacity building amongst farmers – training them in modern farming techniques and better marketing methods. Groundnuts are one of the cash crops in the sector and their cultivation is better adapted to fallow lands than most food crops, as demonstrated in pilot experiments carried out by PACT agronomists in an abandoned field at Mimia. Therefore, farmers will try to replicate the successes of the pilot experiment by cultivating groundnuts on existing fallow lands, and thus avoid clearing and felling more trees. It should be stressed that this approach will also mean less work for them overall.

Drawing up Community Action Plans

Drawing up problem trees and solution trees enabled communities to come up with their own community action plan (CAP). Thirty Lokolama villages have already developed CAPs. Poverty, and its alleviation, are a central element of these plans.

The CAP is the basis of the COBAs’ programme to improve living conditions in the Lokolama sector. It highlighted eight areas which, in order of priority, are: agriculture, health, the economy, animal husbandry, social amenities, the environment, education and fishing. Let us review some of the proposed ways of reconciling conservation and livelihoods, the key idea behind developing CAPs.

² Copal is a product that increases in value over time. Copal that contains insects is worth five or ten times more than ordinary copal.

Agriculture. The chief concern of grassroots communities is to increase agricultural production, in the hope of returning to the good old days when this sector was the main source of income. Currently, increasing production means a continual quest for fertile land, leading to further expansion of agricultural zones through the felling of trees. In order to avoid the endless clearance of land by destroying the forest, farming techniques need to be improved; for example, by improving and enhancing fallow lands, but also by introducing improved seedlings. The introduction of soil-improving plants such as *Leucaena leucocephala* and the intensification of plant and animal production may considerably reduce the fallow period of existing agricultural land from ten years to two and thus reduce the destruction of the forest.

Health. This entails developing activities aimed at enhancing the value of medicinal plants by selling them (marketing) and cultivating them.

The economy. This covers all the activities related to supporting income-generating activities, such as clearing the dead wood from the Lokoro River, dredging the river, or repairing the road. A farm-to-market road in the sector is undoubtedly the answer to at least some of the transportation difficulties. The COBAs are convinced of this and they are right. Furthermore, all they are asking for is agricultural tools, and sugar cane to help regain the energy lost during the hard repair work.

Animal husbandry. This will involve the development of intensive breeding projects for the production of animal protein that can serve as a substitute for the products gained from hunting.

Social amenities. The COBAs expressed the wish to be organized into associations. “United we stand”, as the saying goes. The benefits of forming such organizations have already been stressed in earlier sections.

The environment. The COBAs are most concerned with legal aspects. They would like to obtain documents granting them the right to manage forests. They also expressed the wish to carry out small-scale logging. To this end, they have already begun to designate logging zones on their

land. They will need to be supported in this small-scale logging activity in order to ensure that the situation remains under control.

Education. This is the key to knowledge and knowledge is a source of power. Helping communities to educate themselves will make them become more knowledgeable, more responsible and less inclined to believe false statements from self-interested groups that would like to keep them ignorant in order to better exploit them. The “WORTH” programme that PACT intends to initiate combines three integrated approaches: literacy, community banking and small business development. As people are mastering reading and writing, they begin saving together in small groups. Once literate, they use their new-found skills to learn how to make loans, start micro-businesses and transform their savings groups into community banks. It will also have an environmental component, raising awareness of several relevant issues and encouraging the development of problem-solving skills.

Fishing. The construction of fishponds will contribute to reducing the destructive fishing methods described earlier and avoid the displacement of the population for 2–3 months (July–September) to fishing camps six days’ trek away from the village.

All in all, drawing up the CAPs was a means of bringing together the communities, without any tribal, regional or even social distinctions, for them to identify their needs. Meanwhile, it also turned out to be a tool, a means, a catalyst for their commitment to conservation and to the CBNRM process in general. This exercise has enabled them to reflect on their problems and to go ahead and forge a vision for the future. It has helped them, for the first time, to think globally and to determine how they can change their lifestyle. With time on their side, they will reap the benefits of their efforts.

Structuring the grassroots communities

Implementing the CAP, whilst ensuring better involvement of COBAs, can thus only be done through “nearby” organizations, namely local associations or NGOs. In order to gather information on the existence of associations and

institutions that operate within a given radius of activity, there are practical sketch representations identifying the existence and interactions between various organizations. This is the Ven and Chapati diagram.

Unfortunately, the conclusions of the preliminary evaluation showed a conspicuous lack of local associations. In the Lokolama sector, the almost complete absence of associations is a serious setback to the implementation of alternative projects. However, in the future, the sector will create associations that will form a network so that actions carried out will benefit a large number of people if not all the villages. In fact, a contract has just been signed with a local NGO, INADES, for the promotion of associations in the sector.

Creating a responsibility charter

Constituent workshops were held recently and a draft of the responsibility charter adopted. The administrator of the Oshwe Territory will sign it in the near future. This will make it possible to bring together, integrate and catalyze the synergy of everyone's efforts, across the sectors and at all levels.

Implementing alternative projects

Three projects have been developed, one of which is already being implemented. This is a project to grow groundnuts which is a recent innovation in the sector.

The goal of this project is to improve farming techniques and popularize them through innovative farmers' committees set up for the purpose, and it brings together all the villages. In each village community, farms of a hectare each have been created. Groups of farmers have been trained and inputs distributed. The harvest will be divided into two parts. One part will be sold to recompense the committee members for their efforts and the remainder will be given to others to launch a broad-based awareness-raising campaign.

A business plan for shipping out the farm produce is being revised and finalized. Studies carried out prior to project implementation show an overall

rise in transport costs and that the COBAs have overestimated what they can actually offer, not to mention the marketing costs and the lack of an appropriate management structure. The cost of chartering a ship is approximately US\$ 16,000 at a time when actual production is well below 100 tons. It is in fact only 46 tons, of which 25.5 tons is maize, 3.9 tons groundnuts, 7.6 tons beans, 8.3 tons rice and 0.86 tons marrow, the total value of which is estimated at US\$ 17,000–19,000, depending on seasonal fluctuations. For example, the "Galaxie", a 100-ton private whaler docked at Lokolama port, was there for more than two months without ever becoming fully loaded. This is another reason for COBAs to form themselves into associations or cooperatives, enabling them to reduce production cost, increase yields, create warehouses, better negotiate contracts, etc ...

The other ongoing project is the exploitation of copal. The populations and local associations of Monkoto are more than motivated to engage in the collection and sale of copal. The local people have collected samples in the corridor between Salonga and Monkoto through WWF which has also initiated a CBNRM programme here. PACT Congo has transported these samples to Madagascar, a country known for its export of quality copal. Production and the market seem to be guaranteed. The technical and especially financial feasibility of the project will be assessed, culminating in getting the necessary procurement contracts duly signed (a draft contract is in hand).

Lessons learned

1. Without cushioning measures, grassroots communities that are motivated and in favour of integrated community management of natural resources risk becoming disaffected : If grassroots communities are not convinced that it is in their best interests to manage "their" natural resources, there will be no community or participatory management of natural resources. Good words need to be followed by concrete actions.

Involving and motivating COBAs requires being aware of their socio-economic and cultural realities. Taking account of people's livelihoods ap-

pears to be an important factor in motivating local people, even the most resistant, and in gradually raising their awareness of conservation. Did a wise old man from Salonga not say after a workshop that if one wants to take a nut away from a child, s/he should be given something similar in exchange? In other words, the way to motivate COBAs to take part in the CBNRM process, is to focus on the socio-economic security that may be obtained from supporting their livelihoods. A lack of concrete support for micro-projects focusing on livelihoods would hinder their commitment to the process. The enthusiasm of COBAs at work observed during the village workshops is tangible proof of the chances and prospects for success if the conservation of natural resources is mainstreamed into the socio-economic development of these communities. Without the accompanying financial resources, the motivation observed in the elaboration of the management plans, with communities sometimes giving up ten days or more of their time to take part in workshops, may turn into frustration or even revolt in extreme cases. Thus there is a need to find a financing framework, an annual donor's roundtable where various development plans can obtain financial or material support.

2. Grassroots communities are more interested in their daily survival than in conservation

: The Community Action Plan is a multi-sectoral plan. During the drawing up of the CAP, it was realized that conservation was not the primary concern of the villagers. This can obviously be explained by their dependence on natural resources and their difficult living conditions. However, rather than taking this as a negative, the fact that it was identified as an issue at all is encouraging. Although conservation does not rank highly in their list of priorities, it was raised by the local people themselves without any external pressure.

Nonetheless, this means that more effort has to be made with regards to raising awareness so that COBAs better understand the benefits of linking their development to conservation. The reconstruction of the Lokolama to Bisengebatwa road should not for example become an opportunity to increase the bushmeat trade. Control mechanisms have to be developed and monito-

red by COBAs.

It was with this concern in mind that the programme devoted a significant amount of time to education and raising environmental awareness before launching activities to improve living conditions, in order to avoid any confusion and to have some assurance that the local population have understood the basis for rational management of natural resources without losing sight of their priorities. In practical terms, it will entail identifying livelihood activities that are compatible with conservation and setting up structures to monitor environmental impact, so as not to fail in the objective of contributing to poverty alleviation while conserving biological diversity.

3. Improved means of transportation, a remedy to the development of trade for grassroots communities

: Transport remains the major bottleneck in the Lokolama sector. The gradual deterioration of transport infrastructure has isolated the area, and caused the local communities to lose heart. Farming has been abandoned for hunting. Projects are blocked because of the exorbitant cost of transportation, etc.

There needs to be a meticulous analysis of this aspect. The analysis has to be done on three levels: the short, the medium and the long term. This will enable the situation to evolve towards COBAs gradually taking control of the means of transportation. Transportation has a considerable multiplier effect on their daily life, in that the partial or total resolution of transportation problems will make it possible to improve the living conditions of communities that are suffering from, amongst other things, shortages of basic commodities such as salt and sugar, the prices of which are scarcely affordable even when they are available.

In Lokolama, the communities have shown their willingness to carry out road repairs – at least the one leading to the Lokolama port. Such initiatives can, for a time, alleviate the difficulties they face especially with the hope of increasing agricultural production thanks to the intervention of international NGOs. However, it must be borne in mind that the opening up of roads and trails has to be accompanied by control measures, through the

natural resource management committees, in order to prevent the development of the bush-meat trade, and thus obtain the opposite effect from that desired.

Meanwhile, the prospect of increasing agricultural production in this landlocked zone has to be guaranteed by securing the ways and means of shipping out agricultural produce. If conditions are not met or if access to transportation is interrupted, communities will run the risk of serious over-production because of the lack of a nearby market and other possibilities of supply. That is why any plan for marketing agricultural produce has to go beyond the current restricted vision of sporadic or opportunistic shipments, and include the drawing up of a transport strategy that will guarantee viable trade in the land.

4. Structuring and institutionalizing grass-roots communities, imperative for the success of any alternative project : Capacity building, achieved through the structuring of communities, is the foundation and the prerequisite for the development of any activity with grass-roots communities. Acting with individuals alone would be a dissipation of effort, and restrict the number of beneficiaries of any particular project or activity. Constituting COBAs into associations would give them a legal status different from that of individual members. This legal status would give them the power to sign contracts with individuals or companies within the framework of the prospective trading networks they have identified, and to be able to act in legal matters.

While such capacity building is still on-going, intermediary solutions had to be found during the execution of a groundnut agricultural project and during a feasibility study of the copal sector. For the groundnut project, this meant identifying and bringing together innovative farmers. For the copal project, an association in Monkoto (CPFNLEA : *Commercialisation des Produits Forestiers Non-Ligneux, Elevage et Agriculture*) issued a signed authorization to PACT Congo to set up a trading contract between an import company in Madagascar and this association. This local association acts as an intermediary between the grassroots communities and the copal buyers.