

Chapter 6

THE PROMOTION OF NATIONAL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE AGENDAS FOR CONSERVATION

The Promotion of National Policy and Governance Agendas for Conservation : Lessons Learned from the CARPE Program

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CARPE

The Promotion of National Policy and Governance Agendas for Conservation : Lessons Learned from the CARPE Program

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

It is often said that policy and legislative issues are the bedrock of any socio-cultural and political structure – be it a small village community at the heart of the Congo Basin forest or a large state in central USA. This is obvious because they help control and maintain any structure, facilitate cohesion among actors, reduce conflicts and, above all, ensure the effective management of natural resources. While it is also true that most policies and legislations are in the form of written documents – as in modern States, others are not – as in village communities. However, whether they are written or unwritten, one thing is clear – they often manifest themselves in the form of unwritten norms, actions, behaviours, roles and statuses that help determine whether a person is acting conventionally or unconventionally. If not,

cultural or political custodians tap from these policies and laws to come up with some corrective measures (sanctions, etc.) to ensure that deviants are brought back on track.

The diversity and complex nature of socio-political structures make it very challenging to put in place, and implement, appropriate policies and laws that effectively take into account both “modern” and local knowledge in natural resource management (NRM). To guarantee that the effective implementation of these laws and policies will have a significant impact on the ground, indicators need to be put in place that can prove that the rational use of these natural resources is fostering sustainable regional, national and local development. Some say that this is possible only if modern laws and policies are not only consistent with customary laws but also keep on adapting to innovative conservation dynamics.

Although most countries in Central Africa have taken giant strides in reforming most of their NRM codes, especially the forestry codes, there is still plenty of progress to be made. There has been a call for the various stakeholders to work alongside government officials to ensure that some of these laws are either reformed or adapted, or that implementation decrees are passed if this has not been done yet, as is the case with some countries.

This is why the CARPE Phase 2b programme, notably its governance components commonly known in our jargon as IR2 (Intermediate Result 2), has been focusing on good governance issues in natural resource management because it is an invaluable tool to avert forest degradation and the loss of biodiversity in Cameroon, Republic of Congo (RoC), Gabon, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Rwanda, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, the Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea. A major objective of the CARPE Focal Points and Country Team members is to facilitate good governance in the management and use of natural resources by focusing on strategies that will subsequently facilitate policy/legislative change and/or reforms. Another crucial issue for CARPE is to push for a “people-centred approach” to conservation by facilitating the implementation of key reforms so that they can have sustainable impact on the lives of populations in terms of reconciling the conservation of natural resources and sustainable livelihoods.

To share their experiences with others, CARPE Focal Points have come up with four case studies on lessons learned from Gabon, Cameroon, RoC and DRC. The goal of these studies is to show that a good national policy and governance agenda is the bedrock to sustainable resource management and local development. They show how they have used concrete field data to help influence policies, laws and various regulatory frameworks (through advocacy, communication, etc.) or conversely have helped to create enabling policy and legal frameworks to facilitate work at the landscape level. The aim of this paper is to provide a synthesis of these four studies, showing some similarities and differences, followed by some key recommendations.

1.2 The importance of promoting a national policy and governance agenda for conservation

Although Central Africa harbours the richest biological diversity in Africa and is the second largest continuous expanse of tropical forest in the world after Amazonia, most environmental specialists and policy/decision makers are very uncomfortable with the persistent rate of forest degradation and loss of biodiversity in the region. Current NRM policies and legislative frameworks have not been able to effectively balance local and national development needs and the conservation of biodiversity. Some observers strongly believe that increased human population and lack of development opportunities are the major drivers of this unfortunate phenomenon. Other dominant dynamics include: unsustainable agriculture, irrational forest and mineral exploitation, armed conflicts, road construction without adequate environmental impact assessment, unsustainable hunting, poaching, fire, large population movements in times of war (refugees) etc., invasive alien species, climate change, etc. The armed conflict in DRC and RoC, the increasing problem of arid lands in the northern part of Cameroon as well as the vast, complex and enormous territory of DRC, have all made it very difficult to implement most of these policies and laws. Also, the creation of enormous tracts of protected areas in Gabon (13 national parks), without putting in place consistent institutions and policy mechanisms to manage them, has only fuelled additional pressure on these resources, creating discord between local populations, government officials and international organizations.

However, on analysis, some observers are of the opinion that the root cause of forest loss in Central Africa is the difficulty some decision makers have in coming up with, and implementing, effective, consistent, harmonized and feasible conservation and development policies and laws which aim to satisfy current human practical needs without compromising the use of these resources by present and future generations.

Although sound policy and legislative reforms aimed at reversing forest degradation and the

loss of biodiversity are currently in force in most countries in the Congo Basin, especially in Cameroon, Gabon, RoC and the DRC, a quick look at the various national policy and legislative agendas shows that their elaboration, implementation and monitoring differ from one country to another. For example, most observers are of the opinion that although Cameroon is regarded as “far advanced” in putting in place a robust environmental policy and legislative agenda (1994 Forestry Code; 1995 Implementation Decree; 1995 Forestry Policy, etc.), much still has to be done to facilitate their implementation, notably on community involvement in natural resource management and illegal logging. These tools not only failed to put in place appropriate implementation mechanisms, but also showed inconsistency between some articles and laws. Also, there are outright incompatibilities in some environmental policies and legislations when it comes to who is actually in control of certain resources. For example, some stakeholders and government officials in most countries are still confused as to their roles and responsibilities in managing various sectoral issues such as forestry, agricultural, lands and mineral resources, etc. Some of these gaps were not noticed when the laws and policies were drafted. To help remedy this, the Cameroonian Government, for example, has already put in place the necessary structures to reform its forestry law. Although their forestry codes have been updated in recent years, countries like Gabon and the Republic of Congo have still to step up their national strategies to effectively involve community-based structures in government efforts in natural resource management. Also, because of its vast and complex nature (2,345,000 km²), the DRC is currently struggling in its fight against poaching and illegal logging, mainly because of the lack of manpower, resources, funds and adequate modern technology to control their resources in spite of the adoption of their new forestry code in 2002.

However, although there are obvious problems, there is ample evidence that most countries in the region are taking giant strides to strengthen their good governance strategies to ensure effective natural resource management. For example in DRC, the Government, through its Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Document, has iden-

tified the forest as a key sector for development. This explains why the 2002 Forestry Code is the base for all forestry operations in the country. In the Republic of Gabon, the 2001 Forestry Code (Law N° 16/2001 of December 31) as well as the 2007 Law on National Parks (Law N° 003/2007 of September 11) brought in a lot of innovations in terms of forest and wildlife management as well as community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). In Cameroon, seen as the pioneer of forestry reform in Central Africa, the impetus came before and immediately after the 1992 Rio Conference with the creation of the Ministry of the Environment and Forestry (MINEF) for the effective management of flora and fauna. To this effect, the groundwork was set for the elaboration of the first draft document on forest policy in 1993 while one year later, the 1994 Forestry Law (Law N° 94/01 of January 20) was promulgated. This provided adequate material for the publication of the Cameroonian Forestry Policy in 1995. The Republic of Congo has not been lagging behind because the Government has been at the forefront in defining sustainable management policies and laws. The Government was praised when it produced its new 2000 Forestry Code (Law N° 16/2000) and the 2008 Law on the Conservation and Management of Wildlife (Law N° 37-2008 of November 28, 2008). The stage was therefore set for sustainable forestry management in all four countries.

At the regional level, there has been some consensus in Gabon, Cameroon, DRC and the RoC to join their other six neighbours in elaborating a consolidated Central African Forest Commission (French acronym COMIFAC) Convergence Plan – an outcome of the 1999 Yaounde Heads of State Summit and the 2005 Second Heads of State Summit that produced the COMIFAC Treaty. Most stakeholders were aware that laying down a harmonized regional policy framework was the only way to achieve effective natural resource management both at a national and sub-regional level.

1.3 CARPE's approach to promoting a national policy and governance agenda for conservation

CARPE's approach has been very proactive ever since its inception in 1995. In order to facilitate the implementation of its Strategic Objective which is to reduce the rate of forest degradation and loss of biodiversity through increased local, national and regional NRM capacity in nine Central African countries, CARPE and its partners have concentrated their efforts on capitalizing on the results of the first phase which focused on the increase of conservation knowledge, institutional development and capacity building of the various actors. This second phase has highlighted three main objectives – elaboration and implementation of sustainable NRM practices; the improvement of environmental governance; and the strengthening of natural resource monitoring capacity.

Following the recommendations of a mid-term evaluation report in February 2006, IUCN has become a core partner and, since October 2006, has been responsible for the “natural resources governance strengthened” component (IR2). Since then our major approach has focused on strengthening partnerships with existing governance structures, and encouraging host countries and COMIFAC/Congo Basin Forest Partnership partners to participate in the decision-making process of the programme, use the small grants to build the capacities of civil society organizations (CSOs) to advocate for policy and legislative actions, and increase communication between various stakeholders. With this new role, a CARPE-IUCN Regional Program Manager is coordinating the efforts of CARPE Focal Points to convene and coordinate Country Team meetings aimed at implementing and monitoring activities in order to promote short and long-term policy and legislative reforms. Country Team members include designated government officials, parliamentarians, national and international conservation organizations, bilateral and multilateral organizations, research institutes, etc. In addition to the organization of Country Teams, Focal Points organize a policy, regulatory and legislative agenda aimed more especially to build the

capacity of local CSOs in their advocacy and social mobilization roles. Through Country Teams, the CARPE Focal Points also work with CARPE-funded Landscape and cross-cutting partners as well as other conservation actors in the countries. While some members seek to use their field research results to lobby for policy/legislative change in order to facilitate the sustainable management of natural resources, others engage in advocacy activities to facilitate the implementation of field-based conservation programmes. This approach has proved very successful over the years as Country Team members have contributed significantly to the elaboration of new laws and policies and the updating of archaic laws.

2. Review of the policy and governance case studies

2.1 Lessons learned from the Democratic Republic of Congo

With a surface area of close to 2,345,000 km², the forests of the Democratic Republic of Congo cover close to 60 percent of its territory and constitute about 50 percent of the entire Congo Basin forest area. However, although these forests are among the most biodiversity-rich in the world in terms of flora and fauna, its population is still poor with the majority living on less than a dollar a day. The reason for this unfortunate paradox was clarified by the authors of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Document who identified bad governance as one of the major causes of this poverty and suggested some critical issues that needed to be addressed to promote good governance. Most people identified armed conflict as a contributory factor to poor governance in the management of natural resources because it destabilized the capacity of public institutions and the local populations to manage these resources. Since the wars, the Government has been concentrating most of its efforts on seeing how their rich resources could be sustainably used to promote development.

However, most observers believe that the ongoing democratization process should be pursued to promote good governance. The new constitution of the Republic, the new mineral and

investment codes, the 2002 forestry code, the decentralization laws, etc., are all evidence of the ongoing democratization process and the good intentions of the DRC Government. With the help of partners like CARPE, measures have also been taken to ensure the implementation of these NRM reforms. These include the cancellation of close to 25 million hectares of illegal forest concessions; the periodic publication of lists of forest contracts and their fiscal status to ensure transparency and sustainable use of natural resources; the recruitment of international independent observers to oversee the implementation of the forest exploitation reform; etc. Also, the recruitment of an observer to support forestry control and the preparation of the implementation decree of the Forestry Code was an important step taken by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other partners who supported the process. The Government has also initiated reform of Law N° 069 on the protection of nature as well as participatory elaboration of a national forestry and conservation policy.

However, despite all these efforts most national and international conservation and development actors are strongly of the opinion that poor governance is still a very important issue in DRC. The issue of transparency, weak capacity at all levels of government administration to monitor illegal actions, lack of human resources and viable environmental information to foster good decision making, illegal logging in forest concessions, bad tax recovery systems, lack of some implementation decrees, numerous conflicts between forest exploiters and local communities because of inadequate gazetting system, etc. – all still prevail.

Most of these policy and legislative shortfalls were identified by DRC Country Team members who participated in the February 2007 CARPE Inception Workshop that launched Phase 2b and who have since then endeavoured to discuss some of these priorities with decision makers and other actors. Some members like the CARPE Landscape partners and others suggested that some important policy actions could only be properly undertaken if the Country Team was enlarged to include MPs, the private sector and strong indigenous and women's networks. Once this

was done, Country Team members were quite happy with the dynamism and results of the entire team. It has been quite easy to discuss issues and give technical, financial and strategic inputs to facilitate the elaboration or implementation of some draft laws.

To give some examples: representatives of the Country Team worked very hard with other actors as members of a validation committee put in place by a Ministerial Decree to elaborate a draft implementation degree of the 2002 Forestry Code. Their views as expressed in the Committee were simply a reflection of the views of Country Team members. The text was eventually signed and published under the coordination of FAO. Also, Country Team members facilitated the finalization and validation of the manual on the procedures for the attribution and management of Community Forests.

Since the implementation of the 2002 forestry code was an uphill task, Country Team members supported (technically and financially) the elaboration and publication of a commented version of the forestry code by Government experts. When published, this commented version (which will be prefaced by H.E the Minister in charge of forestry) will be widely disseminated to all pertinent forestry stakeholders. It will be translated into two national languages by the Country Team to facilitate its ownership by the local populations. Also, Country Team members carried out a lot of lobbying activities to make sure that civil societies (such as a member of the coalition of NGOs) are represented in pertinent NRM structures like the National Forests and Conservation Programme, the Forest Consultative Council, the Steering Committee in charge of revising the law on nature conservation, etc.

As regards capacity building, Country Team members have been very instrumental in building the capacities of DRC MPs, notably those of the environmental commission. This was done through the organization of training sessions on the Forestry Code (its vision and environmental challenges), illegal logging, the importance of ratifying and implementing international conventions, etc. Along the same lines, CSOs have been in the forefront when it comes to the conception,

elaboration, implementation and monitoring of policy, legislative and development projects. Country Team members help them lobby so that the results of their projects are better appreciated.

Over the years, Country Team members have been working with other institutions such as the US Forestry Service in a bid to make sure that the DRC government starts to consider elaborating a forestry zoning plan for the whole country. It is believed that this is vital in the fight against illegal logging because the information in a zoning plan would facilitate control of these concessions.

A summary of the lessons learned in DRC is as follows. **Firstly**, in order to effectively play their role, Country Team members should work in close collaboration with each other so that they can act as a joint force to lobby for policy and legislative reforms. **Secondly**, it will be very difficult to attain their objectives if the various actors do not develop and implement a robust communication strategy that facilitates the exchange of experiences and lessons learned as well as capacity building to promote policy and law changes and reform. **Thirdly**, in order to make the deliberations of Country Team members as effective and relevant as possible, the Focal Point and other members should organize preparatory meetings. This will help create synergy, save duplication and avert possible conflicts. **Fourthly**, it has been noted that the involvement of CSOs in policy and legislative debates is very important because it ensures that their interests are taken into consideration when elaborating and implementing these laws.

2.3 Lessons learned from the Republic of Cameroon

Some observers are of the opinion that the Cameroon 1994 Forestry Law is the legacy of her three colonial masters – Germany, France and Britain. In fact, it was adopted two years after the Rio Summit and the creation of the then Ministry of the Environment and Forestry in 1992 which was the main government body in charge of the management of environmental issues. The 1994 Forestry Law, or Law N° 94/01 of January 20 as

it is often called, and the 1995 Forestry Policy document promoted some sustainable management practices such as the fight against illegal logging; the gazettement of protected areas; reforestation; the recognition of the rights of indigenous and local populations; the need to reconcile conservation and sustainable development objectives; the recruitment of independent observers to monitor sustainable harvesting in forest concessions; and the setting up of efficient government institutions to ensure the effective implementation of these laws and policies. The Cameroonian Forest and Environment Sector Programme was adopted in 2004 and is considered a consolidated and comprehensive policy document that facilitates cohesion in the drive towards sustainable forest and environmental management.

Also, in 1999 when the Cameroonian President convened his peers in Yaoundé to attend what is now known as the First Central African Heads of State Summit for the Sustainable Management of Central African Moist Forest, most conservation and development stakeholders knew that things would never be the same again in Central Africa because of this commitment at the highest level. This facilitated the creation of COMIFAC, formerly known as the Conference of Ministers in charge of the conservation and sustainable use of the Central African Forest Ecosystems (up to January 2005) and later the Commission for the Forests of Central Africa, immediately after the Second Central African Heads of State Summit in February 2005 that was organized in Brazzaville by the RoC Head of State.

Unfortunately, in spite of this background, some observers are strongly of the opinion that although Cameroon is at the forefront in NRM reforms, there is still a lot to be done in terms of putting in place appropriate governance structures to facilitate their implementation. Numerous studies and observations have shown that corruption in the forestry sector is still rife, especially in forest concessions. Local communities are still complaining over their 10 percent share of forest royalties while women are yet to effectively take on their role in sustainable forest management, etc. The technology, manpower and funds to effectively manage the resources are still not suffi-

cient.

The Cameroonian Country Team knew that they had a big task ahead if they wished to reverse these trends. Through various strategies such as lobbying, capacity building, outreach, etc., Country Team members have done a lot in terms of improving the legal and policy framework (1994 Forestry Law and its implementation Decree of 1995, ratifying the Ramsar Convention, etc.). They lobbied for the update of the Document *Manual of the Procedure for the Attribution and Norms for the Management of Community Forests*. An advanced draft is currently on the table of the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife for signature. The draft decree regulating the management of wildlife, especially the norms and procedures for the attribution and management of Community Hunting Zones, is also available. It was a unique opportunity to discuss the Ministerial Order No. 122 on the setting up of equitable access and benefit-sharing regimes for forest resources. Currently, Country Team members and other partners have been involved in discussions with the Cameroonian authorities to revise the 1994 Forestry Law. At the demand of the Ministry, members have contributed in the elaboration process of the ToR for a Consultant that will take the lead in the process.

As regards Ramsar, the Team provided the necessary technical support to the Cameroonian Government which subsequently led to the ratification of the Ramsar Convention in 2006.

Although information generation and sharing have been handicapped for some time now in Cameroon because of the lack of adequate capacity and information technology, Country Team members have, for example through Global Forest Watch, helped the Ministry in charge of Forestry (French acronym MINFOF) to collect, process and publish data each year on forest cover in forest concessions. Here, data on illegal logging and mining in forest concessions were collected and handed to MINFOF for appropriate decision making. Along the same line, the Cameroon Country Team has set up the Environmental Journalist Network to facilitate the generation, production and dissemination of environmental information.

In the field of participation and capacity building, Country Team members took the necessary steps to facilitate the effective involvement of CSOs in relevant national and sub-regional meetings such as CEFDHAC (*Conférence sur les Ecosystèmes de Forêts Denses et Humides d'Afrique Centrale*). The Cameroon component of the CEFDHAC network (parliamentarians, young people, women, indigenous and local populations, etc.) participated in the entire CEFDHAC reform process and is still very committed to assisting in implementing its recommendations and fostering its links with COMIFAC. Also, the Team facilitated the activities of Access Initiative Network, a CSO that promotes public access to information, participation and justice in decision making that affects environmental management. The Country Team also supported local communities in establishing sustainable wildlife management activities. For example the Committee to Valorise Wildlife Resources (COVAREF) in eastern Cameroon is doing a great job in managing their community hunting zones to obtain the necessary funds to build schools, hospitals and other local development structures.

A summary of lessons learned in Cameroon is as follows. **Firstly**, to successfully push for good governance it is important to start by enhancing the legal, policy and regulatory frameworks. **Secondly**, lobbying for good governance in NRM is a painstaking exercise because it takes a lot of time and energy – one needs to work very hard to change predominantly negative habits which are deep in the fabric of some stakeholders. **Thirdly**, in order to achieve meaningful involvement of CSOs in policy/legal oriented issues, it is very important to simplify these numerous laws and policies and translate them into the national languages. **Fourthly**, it is not easy to work with some stakeholders in the Country Team who are not directly funded by CARPE because they do not feel obliged to implement some of the activities outlined in their Country Matrix. **Fifthly**, enhancing the capacity of CSOs is a prerequisite to ensuring their effective participation and involvement in natural resource management since they will acquire the necessary skills to compete with conflicting interests among other actors. **Sixthly**, although the small grants scheme is an effective way to support CSOs, it can be a source of

conflict if not managed properly. **Seventhly**, although the legislative arm of government is supposed to balance some actions of government, they often compete with some local organizations to manage these resources.

2.3 Lessons learned from the Republic of Congo

With its surface area of 325,000km², the Republic of Congo harbours one of the important segments of tropical forest of the Congo Basin. Because almost 60 percent of its territory is forested, the country is host to some of the richest biodiversity in the world. Over the years, these resources have been subjected to numerous human activities such as forest exploitation, mining, agriculture, etc. Unfortunately, these activities have often been carried out without adequate concerns for their sustainability. Studies have shown that if adequate precaution is not taken, these rich resources will be severely depleted over the years which will be very detrimental not only to the growth of the Congolese population, but also to the Congo Basin and the world at large. With the climate change debate now being taken seriously by most countries in the world, the Congo Basin forest is seen as a public international good that could help avert the negative consequences of climate change in the world.

To address this situation, the Congolese Government was quite aware that with these emerging dynamics, the old forestry law needed to be updated. It was because of this that after some participatory consultation among most relevant actors including local and indigenous populations, Law N° 16/2000 came into force in 2000. Alongside Law N° 48/81 of April 21, 1981 on the Conservation and Management of Wildlife (revised by Law N° 37-2008 of November 28, 2008 on Wildlife and Protected Areas) and Law N° 003 of April 23, 1991 on the Protection of the Environment, most stakeholders were certain that the management of these resources would certainly be ensured. At the regional level, the Congolese Government has often been at the forefront in facilitating the setting up of a regional structure that would ensure regional collaboration in the management of the Congo Basin forest. In 1996, the

Congolese Government hosted the first Conference on Central African Moist Forest Ecosystems (CEFDHAC) which laid the foundations for coordinated management of forests not only among States but among all relevant actors such as parliamentarians, the private sector, research institutions, women, indigenous and local populations, etc. In order to consolidate some of the achievements brought by about CEFDHAC, the Congolese Government also organized the Second Central African Heads of State Summit in Brazzaville that culminated with the signing of the COMIFAC Treaty which is currently responsible for streamlining the management of the Congo Basin Forest.

In an ideal situation, one would expect that all of these regulatory frameworks would stop the unsustainable use of natural resources. Unfortunately, this has not been the case because illegal logging and corruption still prevail, unsustainable hunting and farming are still causes for concern, mining has not complied with existing norms, the manpower and funds to implement these policies and laws are still lacking, the management of protected areas has been very difficult, local communities have still not yet benefited from their rights, and decision makers have not been able to obtain adequate information to take sound decisions.

Given these circumstances, CARPE Country Team members went to work. For example, they took part in the preparation of Law N° 37-2008 of November 28, 2008 on Wildlife and Protected Area Management. The draft law on Fisheries and Continental Aquaculture was adopted by Parliament on December 10, 2008 and now members are lobbying for its promulgation by the President of the Republic. They have also lobbied alongside CSOs for the suspension of Ministerial Order N° 7053/MEF/CAB which authorized the killing of elephants at the periphery of the Odzala-Kokoua (around Miélékouka) and Nouabalé-Ndoki (around Bomassa and Kabo) National Parks.

Lessons learned from the Republic of Congo can be summarized as follows. **Firstly**, the Country Team is an invaluable catalyst for NRM policy and legislative reform or change because of its

diverse and expert membership. **Secondly**, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to lobby for policy and legislative change and implementation if there is no collaboration between all necessary partners such as local administration, parliament, civil society, research centres, etc. **Thirdly**, dialogue and consultation among various actors remain a key factor to reducing conflicts related to the management of natural resources. **Fourthly**, since man is at the centre of all conservation efforts, the success of all our endeavours will depend on how well man is treated in terms of socio-economic-health development. **Fifthly**, awareness raising and sharing of information are vital for the sustainable use of natural resources because they help change attitudes and belief systems. **Sixthly**, it will be very difficult to implement all of these policies and laws if we do not have a sustainable funding mechanism and the necessary manpower.

2.4 Lessons learned from the Republic of Gabon

The current NRM regulatory frameworks in Gabon seek to facilitate the sustainable use of natural resources, and national growth. The elaboration process was fairly participatory since the Government took into account the opinions, views and preoccupations of all relevant actors. For example, the 2001 Gabonese Forestry Code (Law N° 16/2001 of December 31, 2001) and the 2007 Law on National Parks (Law N° 003/2007 of September 11 2007) facilitated the effective involvement of all actors in the management of forest resources and national parks. The laws sought to fill certain gaps found in Law N° 1/82 of July 22, 1982 on the management of water and forest, and brought in some innovations such as combating illegal logging and poaching, community management of natural resources, the link between conservation and local development, sustainable management of forest concessions, transparency and information sharing, etc. The law also laid down some hunting rules. To hunt, one must have one of the following permits: for small or large-scale hunting, for scientific hunting or for capturing wild animals alive. All these permits can be issued to both nationals and non-residents. However, this does not abrogate customary user rights for subsistence purposes.

However, all has not gone well with the 2001 Forestry Code and that is why it was supplemented in 2004 by Decree N° 689/PR/MEFEPEPN of August 24, 2004 which clarified the technical management norms and the sustainable management of productive forests. But this did not seem to satisfy some managers who still find the law silent on important socio-economic issues. Also, the implementation of the code has encountered numerous problems: illegal logging and poaching because of inadequate control by the administration, corruption because of poverty and lack of ethics, inefficient conservation techniques, etc. Most observers are of the opinion that poaching is still on the increase because of the lack of an implementation decree outlining measures for effective law enforcement.

The Country Team in the Republic of Gabon has been very active – they played a key role in the elaboration and promulgation of Law N° 03/2007 of August 11, 2007 on National Parks. It is very important to note that this law has been long awaited, especially after the Presidential Decree of August 30, 2002 creating 13 National Parks. Conservation partners have always been calling for the creation of a National Park Agency to better manage these parks.

A summary of the lessons learned in policy and governance in Gabon can be summarized as follows. **Firstly**, management decisions that do not take into consideration the interests of the local population are destined to fail. **Secondly**, decisions that do not incorporate economic realities will be very difficult to implement. **Thirdly**, information campaigns should always go hand in hand with the adoption of any NRM law. **Fourthly**, because funds given to national NGOs are not sustained, conservation and development efforts are quite vulnerable after these funds are stopped. **Fifthly**, ministerial instability and frequent transfers of senior civil servants have a negative impact on natural resource management. **Sixthly**, partners should be patient because the adoption and promulgation of laws takes a lot of time. **Seventhly**, because conservation requirements do not often tie in with political and economic objectives, there are bound to be conflicts between NGOs and politicians.

3 Conclusion and recommendations

From the above we can see that although each country has its own specificities and philosophy in terms of the identification, elaboration and implementation of appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks, there is some common ground. Below are some lessons learned which are common to all four countries:

- 1- Lobbying for the adoption and promulgation of new laws and policies by Country Team members is not the only answer to sustainable natural resource management. It is very important to ensure that these new or reformed laws and policies are implemented on the ground and their impact felt by local populations and other actors in terms of socio-economic and conservation benefits. Past experience shows that often when some conservation NGOs, governments and community-based organizations have succeeded in having a new NRM law adopted or promulgated, most of them feel that they have “delivered the goods” – which is not necessarily the case, because a law or policy that is not fully implemented is just as bad as no law or policy at all. A strong recommendation would therefore be that in collaboration with governments, Country Team members should always formulate an appropriate strategy to make sure that these new policies and laws have an impact on the ground.
- 2- To successfully achieve good governance in sustainable NRM, Country Team members should build on each other’s comparative technical and advocacy experiences and advantages. If some members undermine the actions of other stakeholders (like competing NGOs) because they are competing for funding from donors or for favour from Governments, most of their resources are diverted towards irrelevant competition and latent conflicts among themselves. Country Team members have learnt from past experience and are now working very hard to create synergy in their activities. It is therefore very important to continue along this line if we want to be both time and cost-effective.
- 3- Although they lack the necessary capacity and funds to be effectively involved in natural resource management, CSOs are still very important actors because they facilitate buy-in from local populations and act as a counter weapon to some government actions which try to undermine their involvement. The IUCN-CARPE Small Grants Program has shown that with just a little seed money, CSOs can be helped to undertake very productive activities, with local, national and regional impacts.
- 4- In order to facilitate synergy and reduce conflicts, timely communication and information sharing among the various actors is very important to ensure efficient programme delivery. It is therefore very important for members to formulate a simple but appropriate communication strategy to be implemented amongst themselves.
- 5- The process of elaborating, adopting and promulgating NRM policies and laws can be very time-consuming. At times there are conflicting interests and viewpoints, and a lack of the necessary funds and other resources to effectively engage and involve all the relevant actors. It is vital that partners exercise patience because any hasty measures will surely be detrimental to the objectives of such an important process.
- 6- Capacity building of CSOs is a prerequisite to ensuring policy change or reforms; however, most CSOs do not often have the means or capacity to play their role fully. The Small Grants Program is gradually filling this gap.
- 7- Although the small grants scheme is an effective way to support CSOs in lobbying for policy and legislative change, it can also be a source of conflict if not well managed. This is because some CSOs are often competing for cash and will not hesitate to denigrate any competing organizations. It is therefore very important for donors to help create a friendly environment amongst CSOs.
- 8- Some stakeholders, including local communities, have been less supportive to the legal governance framework because it is

difficult to have a good and comprehensive understanding of laws and policies which are written in English or in French. It is therefore very important to translate some of these documents into national languages and promote peer capacity building.

Case study 1 - The Promotion of a National Policy and Governance Agenda for Conservation : Lesson Learned from Cameroon

Antoine Justin EYEBE



Overview of the policy and governance context in Cameroon

The forest and wildlife policy in force in Cameroon is a combination of the consequences of its colonial history with Germany, Great Britain and France. After the reunification of the former Federated States of East and West Cameroon in 1972, the construction of a United Republic led to the nationalization of the judicial framework (forestry and land tenure) in order to begin to create harmony and coherence between the two systems, especially in terms of reconciling the fragile rights of local communities.

After the Rio Summit in 1992, the State's leading objective was that the government should meet its national and international obligations, i.e., to curb practices detrimental to the sustainable management of forest resources and to ensure eco-

nomie development of the country through forest exploitation. During this first period, forestry and wildlife policy could be summarized as follows: more emphasis was placed on regulating extractive activities like logging, with a few compulsory provisions on reforestation and a target of 20 percent of the country's surface area to be gazetted as protected areas. Local communities' user rights, which had been identified as being fragile and vulnerable to withdrawal (Obam, 1992), also began to be taken into account.

The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MINEF) was created in 1992 and was the only government body in charge of the management of forestry and wildlife issues. The first forestry policy document was drafted in 1993, leading to the development and adoption of Law N° 94/01 of 20 January 1994, which lays down forestry, wildlife and fisheries regulations in Cameroon. This law is considered one of the most progressive in Central Africa for the following reasons :

firstly, the way forest concessions were allocated, taxed and managed changed significantly, giving way to the introduction of market pricing for timber through competitive auctioning of concessions. There are provisions for two independent observers to monitor transparency and compliance both during the allocation of forest concessions (first level) and during the exploitation of the timber in the field (second level). Secondly, the classification of the national forest heritage into Permanent Forest Estate (PFE) and Non-permanent Forest Estate (NPFE) is another important innovation. The PFE is the private domain of the State, and designated to remain forested in the long term. This includes production forests dedicated to timber exploitation, protection forests for the conservation of natural resources, research forest and recreation forest.

In 1995, the National Forestry Action Programme (PAFN) was presented as part of the broad National Programme for Environmental Management – PNGE (MINEF, 1995). The 1995 forestry policy, which is still in force, has the following five objectives:

- To ensure the protection of the forest heritage and to participate in the safeguarding of the environment and the preservation of biodiversity in a permanent way;
- To improve the populations' involvement in conservation and the management of the forest resources in such a way as to raise their standard of living;
- To enhance the forest resources in order to increase the share of forest production in the GDP while maintaining its productive potential;
- To facilitate the renewal of the resource by regeneration and reforestation in order to perpetuate the potential;
- To rekindle or reactivate the forest sector by putting an efficient institutional system in place with the participation of all stakeholders.

Another important crossroads in the history of Cameroonian and Central African forest management is March 1999 when presidents and leaders from Central Africa met in Yaoundé and made a commitment to enhancing forest management.

Cameroon immediately adopted an action plan in November 1999 that was revised in June 2000. It focused on the following themes: controlling illegal forest exploitation including poaching; and the increasing involvement of local populations in forest conservation. In 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg), they signed up to the Congo Basin Forest Initiative which included commitments to better timber harvesting and processing technologies; ecotourism; increasing capacity for natural resource management in both the public and private sectors; and improving legal and law enforcement infrastructures. Targets are provided by an updated regional master plan being developed by the Central African Forest Commission in which Cameroon has played a key role.

Cameroon also adopted the Forest and Environment Sector Programme (FESP) in 2004 which has been supported by donors since 2005. The FESP is a ten-year programme (2005–2015). It is a comprehensive and coherent policy document that facilitates sustainable forest management in Cameroon. Based on both forest and environmental legislation, the FESP prioritizes five components: 1) environmental management, including environmental monitoring and awareness; 2) production (concession contracting and supervision, promotion of industrial processing, etc.); 3) wildlife and protected areas (focusing more especially on the development of a network of protected areas properly financed and managed with local participation; 4) community forest management, with three sub-components: community forest management, community forest regeneration and fuel wood supply in the northern regions; and 5) institutional strengthening, training and research, focusing on the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) and the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection (MINEP).

Environmental policy and governance successes over the past ten years

Although the current forestry and wildlife policy and laws in Cameroon are an exceptional achievement in the Central African sub-region, the

major challenge is to develop governance structures that will enable their effective implementation by all stakeholders.

However, although this may still appear an uphill task, efforts have been made both by the Cameroonian Government and its multilateral, bilateral and international partners. Several assessments of their implementation have already been carried out (Bikié et al., 2000; I&D, 2000; Global Witness, 2002; MINFOF, 2005; FGF, 2006; Karsenty et al., 2006). From these reports, some of the country's efforts, and positive results that have strengthened environmental governance, can be highlighted :

- The allocation of forest concessions to concessionaires through public bids with the presence of an independent observer to facilitate transparency and competitiveness in the process;
- The recruitment of an independent observer in charge of monitoring forestry activities in the field which has helped in the reduction of illegal logging, poaching and the fight against corruption;
- The implementation of transparent practices such as the tri-monthly publication of forestry infractions and sanctions and the publication of the amount of annual forestry royalties dedicated to local councils (40 percent) and local communities (10 percent).
- The increased contribution of the forestry sector to the GDP. To make it workable, accessible and transparent, a special institution – the Forestry Revenue Security Programme (PSRF) – was put in place to trace and collect revenue from the sector.
- The Last Great Ape Organization (LAGA)/MINFOF agreement to fight commercial poaching and all related trade in endangered animal species by ensuring the prosecution of large-scale illegal wildlife exploiters, and running public awareness campaigns to increase the enforcement of wildlife law and the risks and penalties for wildlife crimes. Thanks to the activities implemented under this agreement, over 50 court cases have been initiated and wildlife crime is gradually being perceived as being as bad as other types of crime in Cameroonian society.
- The WRI-Global Forest Watch/MINFOF agreement to monitor forest cover by tele-detection has enabled the mapping of different land-use options and delimiting forest concessions while at the same time controlling the implementation of management plans.
- The Ministry also put in place a computerized system of forest management information (SIGIF) followed later by the Global Law Information Network (GLIN). The “Network” is a public database of laws, regulations, decisions, judicial and other complementary legal sources, compiled by the governmental agencies and international organizations. This system will surely reinforce access to information by all stakeholders.
- Involvement in the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) process. In a bid to facilitate good governance in forest management, the Cameroonian Government hosted the First African Ministerial Conference on African Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (AFLEG) in Yaoundé in October 2003. The outcome of this very important meeting was to provide Cameroon with the necessary conditions to start its negotiations with the European Union (EU) for a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) that will make it possible to reduce or even eradicate the illegal logging and trade in timber exported to the EU.
- Cameroon also contributed to the setting up of a network of forest policies in the Congo Basin (REPOFBAC). Its main objectives were to promote information exchange between governments, while at the same time identifying priority areas for action, including forestry planning, the valuation of non-timber forest products, community participation, and decentralization.
- The Cameroon Ministry of Forests and the Environment annually publishes the names of forestry corporations that are guilty of illegal practices in forest concessions.
- The Government's desire to ensure transparency and participation in the management of protected areas through co-management has received a strong boost from framework and individual agree-

ments signed with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), aimed at improving the management of Cameroon's wildlife and protected areas.

Some shortcomings in forest governance

Despite the above-mentioned advances, there are important weaknesses and outstanding challenges with regard to forest and wildlife law enforcement and governance :

- The persistence of corruption in the forestry sector has been a matter of debate and frequent criticism for several years. A World Bank report, for instance, indicated that during the October 1997 allocation of concessions, the specified allocation criteria were not fully respected. Because of behind-the-scenes shady dealings, competition among the bidders was not fair and as a result, a huge amount of forestry revenue for the State, the local councils and local communities was lost. The costs of corruption are estimated at 0.5–5 percent of the “coût de revient” of a logging company in Cameroon (Karsenty et al., 2006).
- The weak decentralization policy for timber extraction, intended to enable local communities to increase their benefit from forest exploitation. This approach was put in place to help communities to exploit and sell their forest resources by themselves rather than going through local mayors who are frequently guilty of mismanagement. Though this was a good approach in theory, in practice, the process seems to be controlled by local elites and authorities. Also, many studies have shown that the share of forest taxes transferred by the State to local councils (40 percent for the councils and 10 percent for communities) continues to be rarely invested in local development. This contributes to the failure of the State to meet the second objective of its 1995 forest policy, thereby putting into question the social legitimacy of its forest regulation and policies. The lack of transparency and accountability in the use of forest royalties (40 and 10%)

by local councils remains a serious thorn in the side of equitable revenue sharing.

- The weak institutional performance of the administration. The fact that many illegal forestry activities are neither reported nor sanctioned could be explained by the lack of capacity (human, organizational, material) within the MINFOF. This also raises the issue of ownership of forestry reform by the administration. The multiplicity of administrative bodies in charge of forestry and environment is one of the causes of weak performance. The conflict between MINFOF and MINEP is an interesting illustration. MINFOF and MINEP have failed to put in place a functional framework for involving other stakeholders in the implementation of the FESP. The same lack of coordination leads to inconsistencies between the data on logging activities (SIGIF database from MINFOF) and the data on forestry revenues collected by the PSRF in the Ministry of Finance.
- Insufficient funding to facilitate the enforcement of forestry laws and policies. One of the reasons for the poor performance mentioned above is the lack of sufficient and long-term funding for the forestry sector. Though a Special Fund for Forestry Development (FSDF) was put in place following the enactment of the 1994 Law, the disbursement of money from the State Treasury to this fund doesn't always comply with the law, partly because of the weak political position, and hence bargaining power, of the Forestry and Wildlife Minister. In 2005, 3.5 billion CFA were to be disbursed to the FSDF, but only 1.5 billion eventually got there.

The CARPE strategy for promoting a policy and governance agenda in Cameroon: activities undertaken and results achieved

After the WSSD, CARPE's activities were

concentrated on six countries and the programme's strategy was updated. Three intermediate results were anticipated, including forest governance and policies strengthened. To address this, CARPE relied on its partners to put in place a coalition of technical and strategic members to work towards improving environmental governance in the region, and strengthening their capacity to monitor natural resources. Under this approach, it was also anticipated that NGO/civil society initiatives would specifically address illegal logging, bushmeat poaching, and other natural resource governance abuses by bringing public attention to a given problem and generating public support at the national level for remedial actions by government through policy/legislative reform or change. To facilitate the host country's participation, the Country Team group has worked in close collaboration with members of parliament, representatives from the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection, etc., under the supervision of CARPE Focal Points (FPs). The Country Team is a think-tank on pertinent issues related to policy and governance in natural resource management (NRM), and its major objective is to involve all relevant partners in the planning, implementation and monitoring of NRM projects and programmes in the country to facilitate a change or reform in policies and laws. It has a wide range of activities including data collection and analysis, advocacy, communication, etc.

To make their work as effective as possible, the group meets three times a year. The first meeting helps to identify and agree on: priority areas on governance and policy issues; a range of broad-based activities; and the role and responsibility of each organization. At the second meeting, each Country Team member presents his/her report based on activities on which he was the lead. One of the objectives of this second meeting is to help partners to carry out any necessary adjustments before the end of the year. The last meeting helps to assess achievements as per the plans made during the first meeting, and also start planning for the activities of the next CARPE fiscal year.

Below are some of the results that CARPE and

its partners have achieved within the framework of the Country Team.

Improving the legal framework

The Country Team has contributed significantly in terms of promoting the Cameroon Government's accession to international conventions and in setting up norms and procedures for access to wildlife resources. For example, the Government's ratification of the Ramsar Convention in 2006 came immediately after the Country Team adopted an advocacy approach, contacting various stakeholders to explain the importance of the Convention. The Country Team also provided the necessary technical support through the elaboration of the RAMSAR Information Sheets that allowed the designation of a RAMSAR site around the Nyong area as a wetland of international importance upon accession. In addition, the Country Team organized a series of brainstorming meetings on the subject to present the usefulness of the Convention to Cameroon, Central Africa and the world. The Country Team also worked to elaborate norms and procedures that would ensure the devolution of forestry and wildlife management powers to local communities (Community Hunting Zones) by advocating this to the Ministry in charge of Forests and Wildlife. The group contributed in defining and facilitating a participatory process from which the draft norms and procedures for the attribution and management of Community Hunting Zones was developed. The Team also worked closely with the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife to rally civil society organizations (CSOs) to participate in the review process of the Norms and Procedures for Community Forestry, and the Arrêté 122 for the setting up of an equitable access and benefit-sharing regime for forest resources. These texts have since been presented to the MINFOF for endorsement. To improve forest management in Cameroon, a working group was put in place to finalize the criteria and indicators in the Cameroonian context, merging the ITTO (International Tropical Timber Organization) and ATO (African Timber Organization) criteria. The CARPE Country Team played a key role here by working with other stakeholders to identify the most pertinent indicators.

The concept of “community forest” has been problematic since the process started ten years ago because some elites have been requesting forests purely for their own benefit. To avoid this unsatisfactory situation, the outdated manual for the designation, attribution and management of community forests is currently being revised. The Country Team members contributed directly to this process with their inputs during strategic, technical and awareness-raising meetings. For instance, members insisted on some critical aspects such as the responsibility for the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection (MINEP) to assist communities in the realization of Environmental Impact Assessment studies. Through the CARPE and the Country Team support, CSOs were able to insist on some points which will certainly enhance the process. For instance, reducing the administrative burden through a decentralized system that will empower local MIN-FOF staff in remote areas was raised.

Information sharing

Governance and policy improvement in the sub-region have always faced the problem of sufficient accurate data due partly to the high costs of collection, analysis and dissemination.

Through Global Forest Watch (GFW), the Country Team has helped the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife to collect and process data which has resulted in the publication of annual (Interactive Atlas) maps on the logging situation in Cameroon and this has helped the Government to take the necessary actions to improve governance in the forestry sector. The Interactive Forestry Atlas produced by GFW in close collaboration with the Ministry personnel was very helpful in tracking illegal logging. Other data collected on fraud and illegal exploitation of natural resources were also shared with the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and with the Head of the Cameroonian government (the Prime Minister). We had at least two meetings each year with the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife not only to share information in our possession but also seek advice and support from him on the way forward.

The Country Team has also been instrumental in organizing the annual field trip with donors to as-

sess the main programme in the forestry sector (PSFE). Findings from this trip are shared with the public and policy makers.

To enhance communication and information sharing, the CARPE FP also organized a gathering of journalists involved in environmental issues in Cameroon. This was the first ever workshop seeking to enhance the capacity of media practitioners in effective environmental reporting with the aim of promoting participatory management of resources in Cameroon. The workshop covered several topics including approaches for measuring standards through statistical analysis of media output; fighting corruption; and informing the public of sustainable forest and wildlife management approaches.

Participation

To ensure effective good governance, the participation of all stakeholders, including civil society, is absolutely key. The Country Team promoted the participation of parliamentarians in the process. This participation has enabled decision makers to take into account rural communities' voices in forest management initiatives. One example is the Conference on Central African Moist Forest Ecosystems (CEFDHAC), a forum open to all relevant forestry stakeholders in the region. Ideas and reflections from the Conference contributed to decision making by political authorities involved in environmental and forestry issues in Central Africa. For instance, the Conference signed an MOU with the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC). The group's contribution to the CEFDHAC reform process was invaluable, notably because it will facilitate the sustainable management of the Central African forest ecosystems.

The Team was also involved in other coalitions or networks such as The Access Initiative (TAI) process, a global civil society coalition promoting public access to information, participation and justice in decision making that affects the environment. Under this project, a database of information was designed and several training workshops were conducted. Several networks such as the Network of African Women for Sustainable Development (Réseau Femmes Afri-

caines pour le développement durable – RE-FADD) working to improve resources management and transparency also received input from the Country Team.

Accountability

Accountability has improved in the forestry sector with the support of the CARPE Country Team. The Group has assisted local communities to set up management committees in charge of development plans from revenues received from the community-based wildlife management committees (Comités de Valorisation des Ressources Fauniques – COVAREFs) in South-east Cameroon. These committees are independent of local government administrative structures and accountable to communities because they have to justify investments (health centres, schools) against incomes received. Due to a lack of transparency in the existing management of forestry taxes, other committees are also following this example. Although mayors will still have to play a key role in the management of these royalties, they will be accountable to the committees in terms of the utilization of funds. The committee will also decide on the type of investment to make. The Country Team further contributed to the setting up of these committees with a rigorous and transparent supervision of the elections of their members.

Access to justice

Access to justice has been troublesome because most members of the judiciary have not fully mastered the provisions of the 1994 forestry code and its subsequent 1995 implementing Decree and hence they are scarcely competent to dispense justice. Also, it was believed that some members of the judiciary were corrupt, and therefore wildlife traffickers and illegal loggers could easily “negotiate” in court to obtain favourable judgements.

To address these problems, the Country Team organized two major training sessions with magistrates to explain the forestry code where about 20 individuals were trained.

Some partners such as LAGA investigated cor-

ruption within the judiciary in relation to wildlife trafficking. For the first time, this resulted in the conviction in May 2008 of a Senior Magistrate who was helping traffickers. The magistrate had been receiving money and ivory in exchange for his illegal services to them.

Also, with CARPE financial and technical efforts for special projects (CEW) and with the interactive forest atlas regularly produced by GFW, we helped the Ministry to track the illegal bushmeat trade and illegal logging. This resulted in several court cases, and eventually some convictions (see Annex 1).

Access to justice is also hampered by the general public’s lack of knowledge of the law. CARPE and the Country Team liaised with Citizen Initiative Governance (CGI), a non-profit-making association that publicizes citizens’ rights. CGI is currently setting up small offices in three regions including the east and the south where more attention needs to be paid to levels of forest exploitation. The purpose of these offices is to assist local communities in court cases. Most communities, NGOs and CGI staff themselves have appreciated the Country Team’s help in setting up these offices. Lawyers from this association will help the communities in cases which include, but are not limited to, land disputes, forest infractions, alienation of human rights etc.

Lessons learned

- Good governance in NRM is not well established and this has had a negative impact on natural resource exploitation in general and the forest sector in particular. This is because it takes a lot of time and energy to deal with the problem, especially as it is a phenomenon that is deep-rooted in the psyches of some stakeholders;
- To achieve good governance, it is important to start by enhancing the existing legal framework because some laws governing natural resource management have only recently been put in place and at times do not fully take into consideration the context where they will be implemented;

- Some stakeholders, including local communities, have been less supportive of the legal governance framework because it is difficult to have a very good and comprehensive understanding of laws which are written in English or in French;
- Working with different stakeholders within the framework of the Country Team without funding is a continuous challenge in a region where most stakeholders are used to working for cash. CARPE needs to explore the possibility of funding the existing targeted governance activities of some CSOs, aimed at achieving policy and legislative change and reform;
- Building CSO capacity is a prerequisite for effective governance; most CSOs do not have the means or capacity to play their role fully. The CARPE Small Grants Program for CSOs is gradually filling this gap;
- Although the Small Grants Program is an effective way to support CSOs, it can also be a source of conflict if not well managed. This is because CSOs often compete for cash, often blackmailing each other. Also, some of them seem not to understand that transparency in small grants management needs some stringent measures on the part of managers which at times might be looked upon as “unconventional”;
- The decentralized approach put in place to make local populations more responsible for forest resources can be efficient if local élites do not prevent the people’s participation in both forest management and forest revenue investment;
- Community representatives like members of parliament must use their influence to question the executive arm of government on natural resource management during sessions of the National Assembly as this would certainly improve governance practices;
- Local radios have been set up throughout the forest area, but did not really play the expected role in governance due to a shortage of efficient technical staff and the necessary funds. In order to allow them to play their role fully, these shortages should be addressed;
- Both the COVAREF and the community fo-

rest could improve forest governance if local populations were fully involved in these processes. It is necessary to facilitate the legalization of the COVAREF and to finalize the community forest manual by including those civil society observations which support communities’ rights in this process.

Recommendations

The 1994 Forestry Law aims to enhance forest management in Cameroon but still has not been fully implemented to date, therefore non-practical segments of the law need to be reviewed. The fact that the right of indigenous or local populations to use land and forest resources is restricted could impact negatively on their willingness to control and contribute to sustainable forest management.

If reviewed, the forestry Law should strongly consider other sectors such as mining which could impact the forest cover and biodiversity.

It is important to implement systematic audits in the use of forestry taxes by decentralized structures (mayors).

It is also necessary to conduct Environmental Impact Assessments with recognized international standards for all projects that may have forest cover/biodiversity impacts.

Conservation initiatives in Cameroon are supported mostly by contributions from the international community, and as such are constrained in their effectiveness by their short-term nature. To achieve stronger policy reforms in particular and establish conservation programmes in general, Cameroon needs to increase the efficiency of the self-financing mechanisms that the Forestry Revenue Securing Programme (PSRF) has already put in place.

Annexe 1

16 Sociétés forestières suspendues

Décision No. 0145/D/MINFOF/CAB
Du 20 mars 2008

Le ministre des Forêts et de la Faune décide :

Art. 1. Les sociétés qui ne se sont pas présentées pour justifier de la provenance de leurs bois à l'issue des saisies effectuées au Port de Douala en octobre 2007 sont, à titre conservatoire, suspendues de leurs activités à compter de la date de signature de la présente décision. Il s'agit de :

- BK BUSINESS
- CAMFOREST
- EGB
- LL
- SOCIETE NOUVELLE FORESTIERE (SNF)
- TLC
- TT
- ETS JA BOIS (EJB)
- FZ
- ROCKFIELD TRADING CAMEROUN (RTLIC)
- STE FORESTIERE ET DES SERVICES DU CAMEROUN (SFSC)
- TCS
- ETS TF BOIS (TF BOIS)
- TRANSATLANTIQUE CAMEROUN (TRANSCAM)
- TRANSPORT REPRESENTATION COMMERCIALE (TRECOM)
- ETS WOOD SUPPLY AND SERVICES (WSS)

Art. 2. La suspension ne pourra être levée qu'après production des justificatifs valables de la provenance des produits saisis.

Art. 3. Le directeur des Forêts, le directeur de la promotion et la transformation des produits forestiers, le chef de brigade nationale de contrôle, le chef de la cellule juridique, les délégués provinciaux et le coordonnateur du programme de sécurisation des recettes forestières sont, chacun en ce qui le concerne, chargés de l'application de la présente décision.

Art. 4. La présente décision sera enregistrée et communiquée partout où besoin sera.

(é) **Elvis NGOLLE NGOLLE**

Cameroun Tribune : Mardi, 25 mars 2008

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Case Study 2 - The Promotion of a National Policy and Governance Agenda for Conservation: Lessons Learned for Gabon

Constant Allogo



Introduction and background to forestry policies and legislation in Gabon

« The Long March » towards the rational management of natural resources of Central African countries remains intimately linked to the evolution of the legislative and regulatory framework in these countries. During the colonial period, the discovery of Okoumé, Gabon's most valuable wood, and the ease of cutting veneer from it, made it possible to exploit it to satisfy the needs of all the countries of the north. The development of veneer cutting led to the standardization of the process by defining the exploitable diameter of the tree's trunk, i.e., the precise diameter at which an okoumé tree can be exploited. The technology

used at the time made the impact on nature insignificant. In a bid to perpetuate the logging potential of the forests of Gabon, Okoumé plantations were created. The concern for conservation was also extended to wildlife with the creation of rational exploitation and conservation areas for wild fauna.

In view of the enormous potential that the forest offers, African countries are increasingly adopting policies that address the economic and social development concerns of the population.

Thus, concerns about the sustainable management of natural resources are still strong today. There is an urgent need for a form of management that guarantees the sustainability of the resource and contributes to sustainable

development, and improving the living conditions of the population.

Since the Yaoundé Declaration in 1999, countries of the Congo Basin have committed themselves to rational and sustainable management of their natural resources. This commitment aims at harmonizing all forestry laws with a view to joint management of the second largest forest complex in the world. In order to achieve this, they have to adopt several new laws that enhance the use and management of natural resources.

Gabon has reformed its legal framework by adopting two major laws based on the concept of sustainable management of natural resources. These are Law No. 16/2001 of 31 December 2001 on the forestry code of the Republic of Gabon and Law No. 003/2007 of 11 September 2007 on National Parks.

Since its launch in 1995, the Central African Regional Program for the Environment, CARPE, whose objective is “to identify and create conditions and practices necessary to reduce deforestation and biological diversity loss” has been committed to helping States formulate efficient national strategies that contribute to the conservation of resources and to building the organizational capacities of civil society actors in order to make them active partners for conservation. Members of the CARPE Country Team, and their partners, are sharing their expertise with the various administrations as they define national strategies for the rational and sustainable management of the natural resources that are the Congo Basin’s transboundary wealth, and draft and develop relevant legal texts.

The new trends and limitations of the Forestry Code

The 2001 Forestry Code, that abrogates the provisions of Law No. 1/82 of 22 July 1982, has brought about innovation in several areas of which the most significant are: forest management, wild fauna management and the issue of community forests.

Unlike the old forestry law that was silent on the

principles of sustainability in the use of forest resources, the 2001 Forestry Code emphasizes forest management with the aim of rational and sustainable exploitation.

In fact, in Article 18 of the Forestry Code, before any logging, the logging company is required first of all to develop the concession using a plan that has to be validated by the administration. This includes management of wild fauna.

In addition, the management plans of forest concessions, called Forest Management Units (FMUs), include, beyond the technical aspects, two new concerns: a socio-economic analysis and the designation of a conservation zone within the concession.

The socio-economic analysis will make it possible to take into consideration the interests of the local communities living close to the concession (hunting grounds, farmlands ...), and the conservation zone allows for participation in the management of fauna found in the concession.

Under the Code, three types of permits are henceforth recognized: forest concession under management (CFAD), for an area of 50,000–200,000 ha – mostly issued to large companies. The associated forest permit (PFA), reserved for nationals, for an area of 15,000–50,000 ha. Finally, the mutual agreement permit (PGG), also issued only to nationals for local processing, allows for logging up to 50 trees.

Whichever the size of the area, the logging company must carry out an inventory of all forest resources and evaluate them in order to determine zones meant for felling, with a logging plan, and those to be retained for conservation. These documents must be presented to the appropriate authorities to be checked. Further verification may be carried out by forestry officials on the ground.

The Forestry Code, supplemented by Decree No. 689/PR/MEFEPEPN of 24 August 2004 to define the technical standards for the sustainable development and management of registered productive state forests, remains ambivalent on the

socio-economic analysis specified in Article 21 – the text does not provide any explanation of this term.

The implementation decree, mentioned above, stipulates the role of each actor in the process of logging FMUs and extends to technical provisions.

As regards non-timber forest products, « obtaining a permit does not confer the right to exploit forest products including timber » (Article 148). Their exploitation remains under the area of customary usufruct rights and is defined by Decree No. 692/PR/MEFEPEPN of 24 August 2004, laying down the conditions for exercising customary usufruct rights in the areas of forest, fauna, hunting and fishing. The economic aspects of these products are not covered by the law. Exploitation of rattan is beyond the scope of usufruct rights.

Hunting out of protected areas is controlled by the issuing of permits or licences. The Forestry Code provides for six types of permits: small-scale hunting permit, large-scale hunting permit, scientific permit, permit to capture live wild animals, licence for commercial capture of live wild animals, and photo safari licence. These various permits and licences subdivided into categories are granted both to nationals and foreigners (Article 173). However, they do not override the customary usufruct rights of village communities to hunt for their subsistence.

In spite of these provisions, illegal hunting occurs in Gabon (Article 14 and 163) and is on the increase. Increasingly sophisticated networks of poachers are developing both inside and outside the conservation zone.

For provisions on the exploitation of wild fauna to be complete, they have to be accompanied by implementation decrees that will help organize and control the bushmeat sector, and make official the practice of hunting and marketing of hunting products. The increased presence of forestry officials, more staff training, and game wardens patrolling the conservation zone may help deal with illegal hunting.

In order for the major principles contained in the forestry code to become operational, they therefore require the enactment of specific decrees to implement them.

Initiatives supported by partners, aimed at effective management of wild fauna, will only be sustainable if the appropriate decisions are taken at the appropriate time, if comprehensive training of conservation officials takes place and if local communities are made more aware of all aspects of the law.

Community forests are another important innovation of the Forestry Code

Unlike previous forestry regulations, the Forestry Code recognizes the rights of the local population to exploit their forests. Seven articles describe how to create and manage a community forest. Such a forest, usually situated in a rural area, is the property of a village, a group of villages or a canton. The procedure for its attribution has been simplified for the decision is taken at the level of the provincial inspectorate of forestry.

According to the Code, the Head of the provincial inspectorate of forestry is the competent authority to whom members of a village community should address themselves when they wish to designate a community forest for exploitation. He/she will give an opinion on the matter while forwarding the file to the Minister in charge of forestry for a decision. The provincial services are also charged with assisting communities in developing the management plan for the community forest.

The provisions of the forestry code, relating to community forests, are supplemented by a regulatory instrument that is intended to guarantee transparency in the attribution and management of community forests for exploitation purposes.

In the long term, it would be beneficial for local communities to organize themselves into associations or cooperatives for more cohesive action. In order for them to be real community forest managers, they need to have mastered the texts that

govern the exploitation of community forests.

It is not uncommon for tensions to mount in villages where community forests are exploited on a rental basis. They generally arise as a result of the management of revenues paid to local communities.

Those who “know the system” (i.e., those who are or have been involved in local government) may commit their whole community and be the first to benefit from the effects of these commitments.

At the level of provincial inspectorates, apart from the provincial inspector, most of the officials have been recruited locally and do not necessarily have the requisite expertise to carry out the tasks entrusted to them.

In spite of the law’s imprecision on socio-economic analysis, Article 251 of the Code provides for the establishment of a financial contribution fed mostly by forest concessions whose objective is to fund development actions initiated by local communities. This provision will effectively allow the population to deal with their general needs (electrification of rural areas, building primary health care centres and schools ...).

The law on national parks

National parks, formerly governed by an ordinance, are today regulated by Law No. 03/2007 of 27 August 2007. This law specifies the provisions contained in the Forestry Code and the Environment Code.

Historically, Gabon already had national parks before it became independent. In 1946, the Okanda National Park was created and in 1956 the Loango National Park was created. After independence, the Wonga Wongue National Park was created in 1967. These parks only exist in the letter of the law, because no structure has ever been designated to manage them.

In the end, they were transformed into wildlife reserves. The legislation provided for two types of reserves: those devoted to rational exploitation of

fauna and those devoted to integral conservation. Unfortunately, the economic potential of these protected areas, other than their fauna, could make them liable to be exploited. Moreover, in these reserves, only the fauna was ever protected and not its habitat.

Before the 2001 Forestry Code, the provisions contained in the 1982 Forestry Law had already set the basis for the management of protected areas with the introduction of an important innovation: “the wildlife reserve is a perimeter wherein flora and fauna have absolute protection” (Article 38). This law also authorizes scientific activities, tourism activities and recognition of customary rights (Article 5).

When the creation of the network of thirteen national parks was announced, the Government enacted Ordinance No. 2/2002 of 22 August 2002 to modify some of the provisions of the 2001 Forestry Code. This ordinance creates the National Council of National Parks, placed under the direct authority of the President of the Republic (Article 2). This council, an inter-ministerial body, is charged with managing national parks and the activities carried out therein (scientific and tourism activities). It is headed by a Permanent Secretary and the parks are under the responsibility of conservators (Article 3).

Pursuant to this ordinance, decrees to create each of the thirteen national parks were passed. These decrees give the geographical situation of the parks, specifying their surface areas and boundaries.

Law No. 03/2007 of 11 September 2007 on national parks starts by defining what a national park is and outlines the activities that may be carried out in them. In Article 3, paragraph 8, the National Park is defined as a “protected area created in a portion of the territory where terrestrial and marine ecosystems, geomorphological sites, historical sites and other forms of landscape have special protection with the aim of preserving biological diversity and the processes of regulating natural ecology by authorizing regulated ecotourism activities, scientific research and educational activities, while contributing to the economic and social development of local com-

munities”.

This new law does not impinge on the rights of the local population for whom the park is an opportunity to improve their living conditions, through income-generating activities.

In order to achieve sustainable development, the national park associates conservation of biological diversity with economic and social development of local communities. Its management plan, drawn up after consultation with all stakeholders, takes into consideration data related to the history, physical features of the area, biological diversity, etc. (Article 21).

Articles 4 and 7 state that local communities should play an important role in the management of the park and Article 18 recommends that community representatives are appointed onto the local consultative committees for the management of the parks.

Within the park, exploitation of natural resources is not allowed. This is only possible in the peripheral zones, subject to prior conduct of an environmental impact assessment (Article 17) that must be presented to the park management body, for review and approval.

Thus, the biodiversity of the park benefits from integral protection and the integrity of the park is guaranteed by law. This law makes it difficult to degazette all or any part of the park. If all or part of the park is to be degazetted, then a new zone must be gazetted that has the equivalent ecological features and biodiversity (Article 8 and 12). This same degazettement provides for financial compensation to the national parks.

This provision for degazettement is unlikely ever to be applied because of the very specific nature of the biological wealth of the zones designated as national parks. It would be almost unimaginable to contemplate the degazettement of all or part of the Monts de Cristal National Park, since the same ecological features such as the clouds and an abundance of orchids, which are so peculiar to this zone, could not be found elsewhere. Each national park has its special and unique features.

Articles 8 and 12 of the law on national parks attempt to resolve the conflict between the concern for conservation of the biodiversity of national parks and the economic needs of contributing to the country's development, through the exploitation of natural and mineral resources. However, this attempt is doomed to failure because of the multiplicity of decision-making centres and the absence of a national consultation framework for actors. Each ministry takes decisions without taking into consideration the regulations governing other administrations.

The « realistic » opening of Article 12 that provides for the degazettement of national parks in the case of discovery of petroleum or minerals is sufficient proof that the exploitation of minerals supersedes biological conservation. It should be envisaged that brainstorming on an integrated and sustainable management model for conservation zones that mainstream the exploitation of mineral be conducted. The experience of the Gamba protected area complex can be applied in protected areas currently under exploitation with, as prerequisite, the carrying out of a social and environmental impact assessment.

Administrative organization of national parks

In addition to the major principles related to natural resource management, this law stipulates the three types of organizational bodies charged with the management of National Parks, namely: political, technical and scientific.

Article 24 institutes the High Council of Protected Areas, whose role is to assist the President of the Republic. This body is placed under the authority of the Prime Minister and brings together all technical ministries and local elected officials. It defines the national policy on national parks and conditions for its implementation.

A specific text has to be passed to describe the powers, organization and functioning of this council. It is also the appropriate body to resolve the conflicts between conservation and exploitation of natural resources. Its members, all admi-

nistrators, have to discuss and assess projects that may impact social development and exploitation of resources.

The National Agency, an administrative, technical and financial body, with corporate status and financial and administrative autonomy (Article 27), is the body in charge of national parks and charged with the execution of national policy on the protection of natural resources and valorization of the natural and cultural heritage of national parks.

The agency is made up of the management committee, a deliberative body, the Executive Secretariat, the management body and an accounting agency (Article 31).

The chairman of the management committee is chosen from amongst senior civil servants, and is appointed by decree taken during the council of ministers.

Due to its role in the management of national parks, the designation of the Executive Secretary of the agency follows a special procedure. He /she is appointed during the council from amongst candidates previously selected by the management committee, after a public call for candidatures (Article 33). This provision ensures that the output of the Executive Secretariat, chosen based on competence and moral qualities, is likely to be good.

The accounting agent, appointed on the proposal of the minister of finance, guarantees the financial autonomy of the agency.

An implementation decree, Decree No. 19/PR/MEFEPN of 9 January 2008, stipulates the real powers of these bodies.

Finally, the scientific committees of national parks, made up of well known scientific personalities, provide opinions on issues related to biodiversity conservation in national parks. Their members are chosen by the management committee, on the proposal of the Executive Secretariat, with a mandate of three years (renewable).

Contributions of CARPE and its partners

The multi-faceted participation of the CARPE Program in the process of improving environmental governance in Gabon is enabled through a constructive partnership with the administrations in charge of natural resource management. This partnership extends to international NGOs and is engaged in initiatives such as the management of wild fauna, combating poaching in forest concessions, and banning the transportation of bushmeat by train.

Also, for more than 15 years, CARPE has been funding the activities of environmental NGOs, to the tune of US\$ 30,000 per NGO per year. This support aims at involving civil society in the process of managing natural resources and making its participation relevant. The CARPE Small Grants Scheme has made it possible to fund a wide range of sectors: environmental education, research, training, production of documents,

Lessons learned

Decisions that do not take into consideration the interests of local communities are bound to fail

The rational and sustainable management of natural resources is a complex process that requires the acceptance of a great number of actors in order to attain set objectives. The administration has to open up to local communities and to NGOs that work in the area of conservation in order to define together the main guiding principles organizing the exploitation of resources and integrating the interests of all stakeholders. Involving civil society organizations and local communities in decision making makes the implementation of those decisions much easier.

Decisions that do not take into consideration economic realities are difficult to uphold

The concern for development and improving the

living conditions of the population compels African countries to exploit, at all costs, their mineral wealth. The opening in the definition of conservation zones is multidirectional. In as much as it takes into consideration the interests of civil society, it also has to take into consideration the concerns of other ministries. Collaboration between administrations will lead to a consensual definition of conservation zones, in full respect of the geographical situation of mines. Gabon has to combine mineral exploitation and conservation in several of its national parks.

Information campaigns have to accompany the adoption of laws

For better appropriation of the terms contained in a law on management/use of natural resources by local communities and other stakeholders, information and awareness campaigns must be organized for the populations. This will facilitate a better understanding of legal provisions and real implementation of those provisions on the ground. A law that is not well understood will not have any impact on the ground and repressive sanctions will not help – people will continue to do as they have always done.

Apart from information campaigns, within the framework of laws, the implementation decrees also have to be enacted. Experience has often shown that following the promulgation of a law, the enabling instruments are not systematically enacted. This makes implementation difficult.

Unsustainability of their funding makes NGOs vulnerable

The involvement of civil society in the process of rational and sustainable management of natural resources remains precarious, because of a shortage of funds and the way the projects of national NGOs are funded. There are not yet any mechanisms for the sustainable funding of NGO activities. CARPE remains a shining example in Gabon. It is the only programme that has provided support to civil society since its creation, in a permanent manner. These funds, though limited, enable NGOs to execute field projects and to build their organizational capacities. If another

mechanism could also be put in place, with substantial funds, the involvement of civil society would be greater. The relevance of the interventions of NGOs and the performance of their projects are inextricably linked to the sustainability and level of funding obtained.

Partnerships with the administration

The quality of collaboration with public authorities depends on the behaviour of the individuals concerned. Changes effected in some administrations, as a result of professional mobility, can have a great influence on the quality of relations between these administrations and partners. The previous incumbent may have been open and receptive, but there is no guarantee that the person replacing him/her will be of the same character and, under the new regime, partners may find themselves excluded from consultation frameworks within which discussions on improving policies and on the formulation of strategies for concerted management of natural resources are held.

Also, public officials are becoming less able to participate in the meetings of partners, due to their ever-increasing administrative burden. They may also show little interest in some of the activities of their partners.

A long process to enact laws and implementation decrees

For a law to be promulgated and published, it must follow a painfully lengthy process with potential obstacles at every stage. This “long march” starts with its drafting by the initiating administration. In a participatory process, drafts are discussed and enriched by all stakeholders. At the end of the exercise, the bill is examined by both houses of parliament (National Assembly and Senate) that may propose amendments or vote it through without any amendments. The draft text is then re-introduced into the channel for signature by legal councillors and the ministries concerned, the Prime Minister’s office and the Presidency. Thus, a text may easily spend a year in the pipeline before being signed off by the President of the Republic for publication. It is a

process that requires patience and endurance. Once the draft law is adopted, the next step is to enact implementation decrees – a process that follows the same course.

The law on national parks is a good illustration of this process. The enactment of implementation decrees of this law has not yet occurred. Several provisions still cannot be implemented today, in spite of the existence of the law.

Primacy of politics and economics over conservation exigencies

The Government of Gabon has responded swiftly to the positions taken by NGOs concerning issues related to the exploitation of natural resources. There has been some controversy about the exploitation of the iron deposits at Belinga, situated in the Ogoue Ivindo Province. For its exploitation, NGOs require that the legislative framework be respected (environment code) that requires an environmental and social impact assessment as a prerequisite. Since the company retained to exploit this deposit has not carried out any impact assessment, NGOs are opposing the operation. This is in keeping with regulations on the subject. The iron deposit of Belinga is situated at the crossroad of three national parks: Minkebe, Mwagna and Ivindo. Its exploitation, without security measures and any guarantee to respect the environment, may seriously affect these parks.

The mining of the Belinga iron is to be accompanied by the construction, over the Ivindo River, at the level of the Kongou falls, a hydro-electric dam. This huge investment will cause the Kongou falls, situated at the heart of the Ivondo National Park, to disappear, and has created an access road that is useful to poachers.

After clearly manifesting their opposition to these two projects by demanding that certain prerequisites be respected – such as an environmental impact assessment, and the choice of an alternative site for the hydroelectric dam – the NGOs were initially suspended by the Government which accused them of being manipulated by foreign organizations. However, subsequently the

NGOs were summoned to a meeting by the President of Republic for a direct exchange of views. As a result of this, the President decided that the NGOs should take part in all discussions related to the exploitation of the Belinga iron deposits.

Conclusion and recommendations

The march towards an adequate legal framework for rational and sustainable management of natural resources has started and is irreversible. This process makes local communities active participants and aims at improving their social conditions.

Civil society, hardly mentioned in the regulatory instruments, should develop its activities around the interests of local communities and build their capacities so as to intervene in a relevant manner.

The tendency for some administrations to cause all stakeholders to take part in the formulation of some legal instruments on the management of natural resources is appreciated and has to be maintained and encouraged in other sectors of activity. All stakeholders defining the content of legal instruments that orientate and organize the management of natural resources is a very good way of appropriating the process by all and a guarantee for conservation projects to succeed.

For greater harmony and national cohesion, this approach has to be extended to other ministries involved in the management of natural resources: Planning, Mines and Land Management.

The management of forests requires a legal framework that commits States to jointly protect their common heritage.

Case study 3 - The Promotion of a National Policy and Governance Agenda for Conservation : Lessons Learned from the Republic of Congo

Marcelin Agnagna



Background

The Republic of Congo (ROC) has a surface area of 325,000 km² with 60 percent forest cover, distributed in two major blocks: the Mayombe and Chaillu massifs and the great forest block of Northern Congo. Congolese forests that are an integral part of the Congo Basin are home to the greatest biological diversity in Africa. They contain many species of wild fauna of which some are rare and spectacular like the Gorilla, the Chimpanzee, the Mandrill, the Leopard, the Elephant, the Buffalo, the Bongo, the Grey parrot, the Abyssinian ground hornbill, the Aardvark, the African manatee, etc.; there are also high-value plant species such as okoumé, sipo, sapelli, oroko, longui, ebony, etc. Because of their exceptional importance at a global level, the forests of the Congo Basin in general and those of the Republic of Congo in particular require great conservation efforts. The conservation of these forests is not only essential for the wild fauna and flora

but also for the millions of people for whom they are the only source of satisfying the most basic of needs – the need for food, medicinal plants, shelter, fuel wood and other products. The forests play a leading role in maintaining the world's ecological balance and hence are indispensable for the wellbeing of humanity as a whole, directly and indirectly through various ecological functions that they fulfil. Their continued existence has to be guaranteed by sustainable and equitable management.

However, the Congolese forests are facing ever-increasing human pressures due to exploitation of resources, with a consequent significant loss of biodiversity. The main causes of this degradation are deforestation caused by forest exploitation and shifting cultivation (bushfires), subsistence hunting and poaching (commercial hunting). The practice of subsistence hunting is a tradition that has always been perpetrated from generation to generation to satisfy the animal protein needs of the rural population; the noble tra-

ditional rules of management guarantee sustainability of this practice. This balance is today being disturbed with the adoption of new management mechanisms that do not take into consideration traditional know-how. This imbalance is found at various levels:

- Logging and mining companies have opened new roads thereby facilitating access to areas hitherto inaccessible and that had served as refuges and zones of repopulation for animals;
- The staff needs of these companies have led to a demographic explosion and an increase of human pressure on forest resources (poaching and marketing of bushmeat);
- The gradual exploitation of new concessions accentuates pressure on natural resources at the detriment of indigenous village communities that continue to live in a state of perpetual poverty;
- In Congo, the forest is subdivided into Forest Management Units or FMUs, in accordance with Law No. 16/2000 of 20 November 2000 on the forestry code. For reasons of economic interest, these FMUs are primarily designated for timber exploitation and rarely or almost never as protected areas. The total surface area of exploitable forests is about 22,471,271 ha (FAO, 2005) of which 16,167,109 ha, more than 70 percent, are open to logging and this figure is constantly on the increase;
- The country has 14 protected areas representing about 11 percent of the national territory, but only those receiving financial and technical assistance from abroad are operational. Those that do not have any foreign assistance are effectively abandoned and they are in a state of serious degradation resulting from poaching and wanton exploitation of resources; this is the case with the Léfini Faunal Reserve some 200 km from Brazzaville, the Domonika Biosphere Reserve, the Mont Fouari Wildlife Reserve, the Tsoulou Faunal Reserve, the Nyangs Sud Hunting Ground and the Mont Mavoumbou Hunting Ground. The Government lacks the political will to promote protected areas and only contributes a trivial amount to their protection and enhancement. Out of the 11 per-

cent of the ROC's surface area covered by protected areas, only about half of this area receives partial protection thanks to support from foreign partners including the Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE). Very few protected areas have been created after independence as opposed to forest concessions that are constantly on the increase. Protected areas attract very little interest from policy makers in spite of the important role that they play in the maintenance of both animal and plant species and the preservation of ecological balance. This lack of interest is mostly because, to date, no protected area has been put to good use (e.g., through the promotion of ecotourism) in order to generate appreciable economic revenues; there are no management plans;

- Even if the deforestation rate resulting from logging only averages 0.5 percent per year, the rate of biodiversity loss is reaching alarming proportions. The exploitation of logs affects the composition of forests and modifies the quantitative and qualitative availability of habitat for the animal species that depend on the forest.

The national legal arsenal supporting the sustainable management of biodiversity and the environment is made up essentially of three basic laws: Law No. 16/2000 on the forestry code, Law No. 48/81 of 21 April 1981 on the conservation and management of wild fauna and Law No. 003 of 23 April 1991 on environmental protection, together with their subsequent ancillary texts. The Republic of Congo has also signed up to several international and regional conventions such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna, the Convention on Climate Change, the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Biological Diversity and sub-regional conventions such as the COMIFAC (Commission des Forêts de l'Afrique Centrale or Central African Forest Commission) etc. There are some problems concerning implementation of the law because of the very weak capacity of the public services responsible for its implementation; the transitory nature of some texts or some provisions; poor knowledge of the law on the part of the majority

of the public (due to lack of awareness and little popularization of legal texts). At an institutional level, the Ministry of Forest Economy is both player and referee for it is in charge of forest exploitation and of the management of biodiversity and protected areas. This situation does not favour the promotion of protected areas, especially as the Ministry's priorities seem to be geared towards accelerated exploitation of the forest (for timber) without any guarantee of the conservation of other resources such as wild fauna and non-timber forest products. The lack of capacity within the public services to monitor and control logging activities encourages fraud and causes inestimable losses in kind and in cash. It is estimated that about 40 percent of the timber exported from Congo is illicit. The forestry sector, though a revenue generator, only contributes a trivial amount to the economic development of the country and to the wellbeing of communities that continue to live in perpetual poverty. The redistribution of revenue derived from logging amongst local communities is a real problem.

This legal and social shortfall in terms of biodiversity management at a national level is gradually being overcome with the country's adherence to regional and sub-regional initiatives such as COMIFAC, the CBFP (Congo Basin Forest Partnership), RAPAC (Réseau des Aires Protégées d'Afrique Centrale or Network of Central African Protected Areas), CARPE, etc. Voluntary partnership initiatives with the private sector over issues such as timber certification, and on the legality of marketed timber (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT)) are tools that exist to help correct the persistent shortcomings of the forest sector in Congo. These initiatives and partnerships create consultation frameworks and can also lead to the revision and harmonization of policies and laws. Ongoing management plans in some forest concessions may contribute to improving forest management in Congo.

The question asked is: What needs to be done for logging to be sustainable and economically profitable in Congo? The answer to this question will undoubtedly come from partners such as CARPE.

CARPE strategy for the promotion of policy and governance for the conservation of natural resources

CARPE has been active in the Republic of Congo since 1995 by providing substantial support to the management of protected areas and their peripheries through a key partner – American NGO, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) – that has given large amounts of money to develop activities for conservation and the sustainable management of natural resources in three protected areas, two peripheral zones, and a protected area under creation. These are the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, the Lac Télé Community Reserve, the Conkouati-Douli National Park, the peripheral zone of the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park (Kabo, Pokola and Loudoungou FMUs), the south-east peripheral zone of the Odzala-Kokoua National Park (Ngombe FMU) and the national park under creation in the Batéké Plateau. WCS is the main partner of the Government of Congo on issues of nature conservation and protected area management.

A CARPE Congo Country Office has been operational since May 2006, and is run by a Focal Point. It serves as a base for carrying out the strategic objectives of the programme that include, inter alia, the reduction of the rate of deforestation and slowing down the rate of biodiversity loss through good governance of natural resources and institutional capacity building; and also for monitoring the activities of its partners. CARPE is more and more well known within the local administrations, scientific and public institutions as well as amongst civil society, thanks to its efforts to promote and disseminate information about its activities.

A local consultation and discussion forum bringing together the main actors involved in environmental and nature conservation issues has been set up. This forum is called the Country Team. The role played by the Country Office and Country Team is key – it consists of influencing national policies and governance on the management of natural resources in order to achieve the objec-

tives of the programme. To this end, activities are undertaken at various levels, and with various groups.

Local administrations in charge of environmental and biodiversity management issues

In the Republic of Congo, two ministries are directly concerned with environmental and biodiversity management issues. They are the Ministry of Forest Economy on the one hand and the Ministry of the Environment and Tourism on the other hand. The CARPE Focal Point works closely with the two ministries by putting at their disposal its expertise in the treatment of issues related to environmental and biodiversity management problems and by actively taking part in technical meetings and other activities of common interest organized by these ministries. Working sessions are regularly organized between the Focal Point and the technical departments on issues of concern. The Focal Point has encouraged the nomination of CARPE correspondents within each administration to maintain the momentum for collaboration and information sharing. Also, these administrations are represented in the Steering Committee for the selection of micro projects (Small Grants) and in the CARPE Country Team. The Focal Point, who has a not insignificant audience, regularly addresses technical papers on issues of concern (and sometimes of a sensitive nature) to the Ministers in charge of the environment, forestry and biodiversity, which have often had a positive effect.

Partners

The Country Office and the Country Team play a role in monitoring and guiding partners that receive funds from CARPE for carrying out activities on the ground. In Congo, the key privileged partner is the American NGO, WCS, that has signed memoranda of understanding with the Government of Congo to manage biodiversity in a number of protected areas and their peripheries. At this level, the Focal Point plays the role of facilitator between WCS and local administrations as well as other institutions working in the same field. It helps disseminate scientific information

gathered in the field to other conservationists, so that they can take advantage of it in their conservation activities. With local NGOs and other institutions, it has instituted various fora for discussion and consultation on the management of biodiversity such as the network of local environmental NGOs, the CARPE Country Team. The Focal Point takes part in guiding local NGOs and strengthening their operational capacities for them to be able to play their role of counterweight to the Government and actively take part in the management of natural resources. It is the same for village communities especially those that live in and around protected areas and in forest concessions. At the level of protected areas, the CARPE Focal Point supports actions aimed at organizing grassroots communities, raising their awareness on environmental preservation and community development initiatives. In collaboration with the management units of two large forest concessions in northern Congo, notably in Ngombe (IFO Danzer) and Pokola (CIB: Congo-laise Industrielle du Bois), the Focal Point has initiated activities aimed at organizing and preparing local communities so that they are able to benefit from revenues derived from logging and assisting them to carry out community projects. At the level of these two concessions, a village fund was created provisioned by part of the surface area tax that the company pays directly to the account of communities. There also, the CARPE Focal Point has supported a local NGO in drawing up a proposal to be submitted for funding to the CARPE Small Grants Scheme. It has to do with preparing village communities of the Ngombe forest concession to take up their rights and manage the revenue derived from logging in a sustainable manner, especially the village fund. The purpose is to strengthen these communities so that they fully participate in the management of the resource.

The Country Team is also a strategic instrument. By its very composition (actors and partners influential in conservation), it indirectly influences national policy and government decisions on the management of natural resources. Members of the Country Team, in their professional capacity, are directly involved in decision-making bodies in environmental and natural resource management.

There is permanent contact with local nature conservation NGOs and associations through the network established by the Congo CARPE Office. Capacity building for local NGOs is a key issue given the role they should play in influencing government decisions and policies. The results are very encouraging: two local NGOs – Conservation de la Faune Congolaise and Association pour la Protection des Ecosystèmes Tropicaux et Développement de la Sangha – are influential members of the independent observatory of the forests of Kabo, Pokola, Loundoungou FMUs (CIB) and actively participate in the processes of certification and of establishing the legality of marketed timber. These two NGOs have received CARPE training and have been recipients of the CARPE Small Grants 2006. They promote CARPE's vision in any discussions in which they have the opportunity to take part. Local NGOs have begun to assert themselves and have in some cases become indispensable to the private sector. Their advice is sought in the development of management plans for forest concessions, something that was rare and almost taboo a few years ago.

Parliamentarians

The CARPE Focal Point and the Country Team interact very closely with the Parliamentary Commission in charge of environmental issues with which working sessions are held fairly regularly to raise topical issues and examine the status of files related to the management of natural resources and the environment that have been submitted to the Assembly. They have worked to revive the process of promulgating the new law on wildlife, which has just been put back on the agenda of the next session of parliament for transfer to the General Secretariat of Government, the final step.

Local media

The Congo CARPE Office has contributed to the establishment of a communications network specializing in environmental issues. This network receives the regular support and supervision of the CARPE Office in Congo, which has already organized two capacity-building workshops for its benefit. The press is widely used to disseminate

environmental information; it has a significant impact on the public and the government. The CARPE Office in Congo contributes, and supports the publication of, articles on environmental issues and nature conservation in the local press. The same channel is used to some extent to attract the attention of the public and policy makers to issues of concern in the management of forest resources. Articles on forest management issues, such as sharing revenue from logging, deforestation and habitat degradation and the impacts of logging on the survival of indigenous communities, etc. have thus become quite common in the local press. The Focal Point is involved with the NGO INCEF (International Conservation and Education Fund) in the production and distribution of documentary films to raise public awareness on issues related to the environment and nature conservation and on advocacy of indigenous peoples. The same is true for awareness on legislation and national policy on conservation and natural resource management. The documentaries produced by INCEF are distributed across the country by partners involved in conservation and serve as tools for public awareness. A weekly programme called “espace environnement” involving the Country Office of CARPE Congo is broadcast once a week on national television. National and local radio are also used to disseminate environmental information. This is especially because the people in the hinterlands listen to the radio more than anything else.

The creation of the network of environmental communicators and the workshops organized for them have had a significant impact in the local press in relation to the increase of articles and column inches on environmental issues. Through this network, CARPE is becoming better known to the Congolese public.

The public awareness campaign on climate change launched by the ROC CARPE Focal Point has had a considerable impact. Public meetings held in halls and the screening of the film “La vérité qui dérange” has impressed more than a thousand people of all social levels on this important issue. This has had a ripple effect on other institutions such as UNDP and Médecins d’Afrique who have requested that the CARPE

Country Office assist them in the screening of the film. The Focal Point has received many requests for copies of the film which is not available locally.

A success story: Actions undertaken by the CARPE CONGO Focal Point to influence the suspension of the Ministerial Order No. 7053/MEF/CAB authorizing the killing of elephants in the surroundings of the Odzala-Kokoua National Park (Miélékouka zone) and Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park (Bomassa and Kabo zones) **Background:** Over the past five years, human-elephant conflicts have increased in Congo, especially in the vicinity of, or within, protected areas where elephants enjoy protection. The sites affected by this problem are the Odzala-Kokoua National Park and periphery, the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park and periphery, and the Conkouati-Douli National Park and periphery. These three sites are the best protected from poaching in the country. The first is managed by EU-funded regional environmental programme ECOFAC with support from WWF and WCS; the other two sites are managed by WCS with funds

from CARPE-USAID, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and other donors. Conservation efforts made in these areas have been successful, leading to an increase in the animal population. Large mammals in particular are increasingly abundant in the periphery and in areas of human occupation. As regards the elephant population, field data do not show an increase in the population except for migration to areas of human activity including the vicinities of villages and farmlands. This trend is observed at all three sites. Why elephants prefer the edges of villages to the depths of the forest is unknown. Some people, such as Forestry Administration staff, claim that the population has increased but there has been no inventory to confirm this. On the other hand, data analysis from game warden patrols has led to the following hypothesis: that pressure from poaching carried out deep in the forest pushes elephants to seek refuge around and sometimes in villages where they have more security because of the regular presence of game warden patrols. Poachers do not dare kill elephants in areas that are close to human settle-



The elephant in question in Bomassa (WCS Nouabalé-Ndoki)

ment for fear of attracting attention.

The presence of elephants in villages is certainly spectacular and attractive to visitors (tourists) who come. In Bomassa, for example, tourists have a 100 percent chance of seeing an elephant in the WCS base camp and in the village, and a less than 60 percent chance of seeing one in Mbeli bay for example. But this coexistence has advantages and disadvantages. In Bomassa, for example, people stopped planting cassava (a staple food) over five years ago because of the destruction of their farms by elephants. The WCS Nouabalé-Ndoki project has since then subsidized cassava for the entire population of Bomassa, something that is not sustainable. On the other two sites, crops are regularly destroyed by elephants, and the local people are demanding compensation. The farmers' anger is fierce, and can lead to attacks on conservationists and representatives of the administration in charge of wildlife and protected areas, to whom claims are addressed. In Miélékouka, for example, farmers locked up the conservator in exchange for compensation by the Forestry Administration for farms destroyed. However, it is necessary to ask if it was not a hoax by poachers to leave them free to rescue the ivory tusks from their hidden booty. The Miélékouka area is one of the hottest elephant poaching spots. About ten years ago, a mass grave was discovered with more than one hundred elephants, massacred almost at the same time in the Moadjé clearing. This massacre will be engraved in the annals of wildlife conservation in the Congo.

It should be noted that there has been no attempt on human life (no cases of human death).

Although conservation partners and managers operating on these sites initially downplayed the scale of the situation, they have recently begun to think and try to find solutions to this problem. In Bomassa, WCS launched an experimental pepper barrier to protect crops, which unfortunately has proven not to work. At other sites such as Conkouati, they thought of putting up electric fences to protect crops. The fences have been ordered and supplied; the farmers just need to install them and then wait for the results.

While partners were brainstorming and looking for solutions, the technical services of the forestry administration opted for killing the elephants without any reference or assessment and without consulting other stakeholders and partners. They submitted, without valid arguments, a draft order for signature by the Minister of Forest Economy. Despite the lack of arguments, the Order was signed by the Minister with immediate effect.

Faced with this momentous decision, which could trigger the killing of elephants on other sites already threatened by poaching, the Focal Point upon analysis of the situation began to take steps to engage with the Minister of Forest Economy in order to avoid disaster. He wrote to the Minister of Forest Economy seeking suspension of the Order and consultation with other stakeholders. The Minister responded by convening an urgent meeting with partners. The meeting took place in a tense atmosphere, but the outcome was favourable – the Order in question was simply suspended.

For the record, this is how the Congo CARPE Focal Point was able to save elephants and at the same time influence the position of the Forestry Administration, which now always asks for the opinion of the Focal Point and partners in such circumstances.

Some lessons learned

Lessons learned are summarized as follows :

- The country offices of CARPE generally not only contribute to the promotion of the programme in the host country, they play an important role in national policies on environmental management. They become to some extent indispensable.
- Close collaboration with local administrations, political bodies such as Parliament, civil society, the media, research institutions, international agencies and other stakeholders is crucial in resolving environmental issues.
- Consultation and dialogue among actors remain an essential element of a harmonized approach to the resolution of conflicts and differing views on environmental issues and sustainable management of natural re-

sources.

- Man is central to all issues; the success of actions undertaken is reflected first of all in the interests of communities being satisfied.
- Good conservation and sustainable management of natural resources is not possible without taking into consideration the interests of local communities.
- Awareness and information dissemination as well as sharing of experiences are essential in changing habits and attitudes to environmental issues.
- Multi-faceted support and assistance of partners (donors and other funding bodies) remain the main and essential sources of support to conservation efforts and sustainable management of natural resources. The countries of the sub-region in general and Congo in particular can not do without these.
- Sub-regional initiatives such as the CBFP (without which partners

¹⁵ For more on gorilla nest counts, see Mehlman, P.T. and Doran, D.M. 2002. "Factors influencing western gorilla nest construction at Mondika Research Center". *International Journal of Primatology* 23(6): 1257–1285.

¹⁶ To emphasize the context of our work at that time, it is important to note that the first training was cut short and had to be completed in Butembo (Figure 3). After a week at Iseya, our group received word that armed forces of unknown origin (suspected Interehamwe) were camped only a few kilometres west of our position and were occupying a neighbouring village, and possibly intent on doing us harm. We immediately left, but two of the RDT supervisory staff courageously decided to go unaccompanied to the village to try to discuss the issue. They were promptly beaten, and taken hostage for three months before we secured their release. They remain with the programme today, one being the Director of UGADEC, and the other being a field supervisor for the RGT. The Interehamwe eventually left the village and today the village actively supports the Tayna Project. Since that initial incident, Tayna staff have never experienced a similar situation.

Case study 4 - The Promotion of a National Policy and Governance Agenda for Conservation : Lessons Learned from the Democratic Republic of Congo

Serge Osodu Omba



Background

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) covers an estimated surface area of 2,345,000 km² of which more than 60 percent is covered by forest which contains a very high level of animal and plant biodiversity. Indeed, it ranks as the fifth richest country in the world in terms of biodiversity. The country is endowed with several natural resources that unfortunately, because of problems of governance and the recent armed conflicts that have plagued the country, are not benefiting the majority of its people who live in abject poverty. The DRC is among the poorest countries in the world and the majority of its population lives below the poverty line, on less than a dollar a day.

The government's Strategic Growth and Poverty Reduction Document (*Document Stratégique pour le Croissance et la Réduction de Pauvreté or DSCR*) has identified improving governance

as a priority. The DRC is a post-conflict country, which is emerging from several decades of mismanagement of public resources, including natural resources, followed by a decade of instability characterized by conflicts that have been disastrous for the population. The cumulative effects of this negligence and these wars have had a disastrous impact on the capacity of the country's public institutions, the living conditions of its local populations and the wealth of its biodiversity. Social and economic infrastructures have deteriorated. The systems of forest management, of access to benefits, of control and follow up have been disrupted or are non-existent. Post-war DRC is today looking towards reconstruction. The forests which used to be protected from industrial logging, as well as the country's other natural resources, are now the focus for exploitation. The government of the DRC is strongly committed to exploiting the forest and natural potential of the country in order to successfully carry out its five-

pronged programme of reconstruction, and improve the living conditions of its people. This all the more so, as the DSCRIP identified natural resources, especially forests, as a crucial sector in the drive towards growth.

Alongside this keen interest, the country is undergoing institutional reconstruction with the putting in place of democratic institutions, which has entailed a formidable process of acquiring the appropriate tools of modern governance. Several fundamental texts for the management of various sectors have been drawn up or are being revised, including the Constitution of the Republic, the new mining code, the new investment code, the law on the management of portfolio companies, the appointment of new agents/representatives, the draft agriculture code, the law on decentralization, etc.

In the forest and nature conservation sector, with the support of its conservation and development partners, the government has drafted a new Forestry Code since 2002. This new code enshrines the principles underlying a modern vision of its forestry policy. The government has also initiated a priority reform programme geared towards transparency, law enforcement and increased participation of the public. This reform programme has led inter alia to the withdrawal of 25 million hectares of forest concessions from the forest tax system in a bid to re-orient the tax regime towards taxes that are easier to recover and control, and that have a positive incentive effect. Other elements of the reform programme include periodic publication of the list of forest contracts and their fiscal status, in order to keep the general public informed on the management of the country's natural resources; setting up a Technical Working Group (Groupe Technique de Travail – GTT) to undertake a legal review of old forest titles with the participation of an independent international observer, the private sector, civil society and local and indigenous communities; recruiting a third-party observer to support forest control; and drafting the text of the main implementing instruments of the Forestry Code, with the support of the FAO. The European Union will continue the process of finalizing the texts of the 11 priorities that have been identified to accompany the post conversion. In terms of biodiversity

protection, the government is in the process of reforming Law No. 069 on Nature Conservation. In accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity, a priority action plan with 11 priority actions has been validated. Alongside these efforts, in a bid to be consistent with the logic of the new Forestry Code, a national forestry and conservation policy (politique nationale forêt et conservation – PNFOCO) is being formulated, using a consultative and participatory approach at a national level.

In spite of all these efforts, the path towards better governance remains a long one given the challenges that need to be overcome – lack of transparency; the lack of capacity within the forest administration to monitor and control; undervalued and aging staff; and the problem of illegal logging. There is a need for more environmental information and monitoring; a more efficient tax collection system; and more effective implementation of the benefit-sharing mechanisms laid down by the Forestry Code (from the central to the regional and district administrations, and all the way down to the local communities living around the forest concessions). Conflicts are arising between communities and loggers as a result of land being allocated without a land-use plan (LUP) leading to encroachment onto local communities' lands. The issue of indigenous peoples' rights also needs to be dealt with, and general capacity building is required so that all stakeholders, especially within civil society, are better able to play an effective role in natural resource management. Legal instruments need to be finalized and implemented, including those that will enable the enactment of the Forestry Code. Poverty in forest sites must be addressed, and cooperation between government sectors and between institutions must be fostered in the course of developing the necessary programmes and policies. It is against this background that the Country Team of the Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) has made its contribution to the promotion of national laws and policies aimed at the sustainable management of natural resources, and to attaining the strategic objectives of CARPE.

Methodology

The Country Team as a tool for CARPE to take action on governance and policy

The inaugural meeting of Phase IIB of CARPE, held in Yaoundé in February 2007, enabled some members of the CARPE Country Team in each country to identify and plan priorities in terms of governance agendas in the form of laws and specific national policies to be addressed. These priorities included: contributing to the finalization of the implementing instruments of the Forestry Code; monitoring the decentralization process; finalizing the law on nature conservation; promoting the creation of reserves and community management; developing an environmental framework law; establishing a land-use planning process; developing a new hunting law; popularizing the Forestry Code, and contributing to the process of legal review of forest titles, to mention just a few. In addition, a strategic recommendation aimed at broadening it was formulated. The DRC Country Team is made up of the following: officials of the six protected landscapes funded by CARPE DRC, the CARPE Focal Point, the National Coordinator of the Central African Forest Commission (*Commission des Forêts de l'Afrique Centrale* – COMIFAC), a National Assembly representative, a Government representative (from the Ministry in charge of forestry), a representative of the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation, and a civil society representative. Recently, in light of the challenges and realities thrown up during the implementation of the programme, the Country Team has decided for strategic reasons also to include representatives from the private sector, the Senate and two international organizations working in the landscapes, to collaborate on aspects such as community participation fora.

Contribution to the process of promoting laws

The Forestry Code and its implementing instruments

The Country Team has participated in the pro-

cess of promoting new laws by contributing ideas, lobbying and also by providing financial support. The CARPE Country Team has actively contributed to the process of producing implementing instruments for the Forestry Code through its engagement with the validation committee put in place by an Order of the Minister in charge of forestry. Points of view put forward by the Country Team were a reflection of the consensus obtained within the team during previous discussions. The validation committee was headed by the FAO within the framework of its project. This contribution facilitated the signing and publication of these legal instruments. Furthermore, having identified as a priority the finalization of instruments on procedures for allocating community forests and for their management, the CARPE Country Team supported the validation of these instruments by ensuring the presence of their Focal Point at the relevant meeting. This made it possible for two draft instruments to be validated while waiting for them to be published.

Contribution to the implementation and popularization of the Forestry Code

The Forestry Code, besides its dissemination and popularization, remains both a need and an unprecedented challenge. Moreover, there is also the problem of differing interpretations. In the past, the Rural Development Service, together with some local and international organizations (including CARPE), has launched several initiatives to disseminate, translate and popularize this code. The CARPE Country Team supported (both technically and financially) the preparation of an annotated version of the Forestry Code by Congolese Government experts. This document, that has already been submitted to the Minister in charge of forestry for comment and final approval, will enable popularization of the Code and will allow all stakeholders access to the spirit of the Code. It will be a working tool on which all user rights can be based, but also a teaching support for popularizing activities identified within the PNFOCO framework. The Country Team intends to translate it into two national languages for wider distribution.

The process of converting forest titles in the DRC

The Forestry Code allows the conversion of old forest titles (letters of intent and guarantee of supply) into forest concession contracts. To this end, a two-phase process was instituted, the first of which was the setting up of a Technical Working Group and an independent observer respectively for identification work and data collection on titles submitted for conversion. The second component of the process concerns the work of the inter-ministerial commission in charge of the review within which there must be representatives of the local communities and indigenous peoples living around these titles. A total of US\$ 250,000 was raised by the World Bank and managed by CARPE.

The contribution of the CARPE Country Team represented by the Focal Point, SNV (the Netherlands Development Organisation), and civil society was to guide and support members of the coalition of NGO Networks in the implementation of the strategy to designate community representatives. The team supported the administrative and technical management of the project and carried out lobbying activities with partners on legislative aspects accompanying the process. The ministry and other partners were kept informed at all stages of the process.

Several radio and television programmes and newspaper articles were produced on the process. The CARPE Country Team also facilitated the designation of a permanent indigenous peoples' representative to take part in the inter-ministerial commission. The same team also lobbied the ministry over the signing and publication of two ministerial decrees on how to modify the composition of the inter-ministerial commission and on the appointment of commission members. The Country Team also assisted in the drafting of a ministerial decree on the terms and conditions of management of those titles that remained unconverted after the review, because the current Code does not cover this eventuality in the text of its implementing instruments.

As a result of these activities, civil society has been strengthened, and partners and the general public have been kept informed about the pro-

cess. Altogether, the Team facilitated the designation of 195 community representatives including many from amongst the indigenous peoples, and local communities have learnt about the Forestry Code.

Institutional representation

The Country Team (Focal Point, SNV and civil society) has lobbied the ministry on several occasions for representation in a number of national governance processes. These include the PNFOCO Coordination Unit where a member of the coalition of NGOs is represented; the forest advisory council instituted by the Forestry Code; the steering committee in charge of revising the law on nature conservation; and the validation committee for legal instruments (the African Wildlife Foundation and the Focal Point are members). The Country Team also contributes actively to various national fora and meetings on governance in terms of endorsing policies, operational guides, national and sectoral action plans related to governance and forests.

Capacity building

National Assembly

Since 2006, the DRC has set up democratic institutions for its governance including a two-chamber parliament. This budding National Assembly, that will be playing a key role in the country's governance, approached CARPE for assistance with capacity building. Conscious of the strategic importance of this institution, the Country Team organized a training and discussion session on the Forestry Code and its vision, as well as the environmental challenges ahead, for 20 Members of Parliament (MPs) from the environment commission. The success of this training is visible today with the active participation of MPs in environmental debates in the parliament.

Civil society

One outcome of Phase IIa of CARPE was the creation of a platform of Networks of environmental NGOs. This platform had neither legal status, nor a strategic vision, nor a programme of activities. The Country Team helped with the drawing

up and legalization of the Statutes of the coalition, organized a training session on the formulation of the organization's logical framework and strategic planning, and supported them in carrying out their programme. All of these activities have helped them become more involved in advocacy aimed at policy change or reform, with the objective of further involving the indigenous and local peoples in the process of conversion of forest titles, or the annotated Forest Code.

Forest land-use planning process

The DRC has neither a national land-use plan, nor a forest LUP and has therefore been groping its way in the dark when it comes to allocating forest concessions. This has caused several conflicts on usage and occupation between various stakeholders. With the new Forestry Code, the DRC wants to have its own forest LUP. A national workshop was organized (with the help of IUCN) to capitalize on the experiences of several partners on the matter. CARPE partners as well as the Focal Point gave presentations and pleaded for CARPE experience of large-scale planning to be made use of. Discussions are still underway.

Diplomacy

In the course of implementing the programme, several strategic partnerships have been developed with public institutions and partners, as well as contacts in various ministries whose activities could be considered to interact directly with those of CARPE. These include the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization, the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Mines, the Ministry of Public Works and Reconstruction, the Ministry of Rural Development, and the Ministry in charge of forests.

We have also been privileged to work in collaboration with the National Assembly through its commission and the Presidency of the Republic in the execution of our activities. Thanks to the work of the Country Team, CARPE's reputation and image are strong in the eyes of its partner institutions, and collaboration is fruitful. In the near future, the expansion of the Country Team will allow it to open up to the private sector, to the

Senate and to the Prime Minister's Office.

Lessons learned

The Country Team as a platform for action

The Country Team has facilitated the creation of a coalition of various actors of different interests, of diverse horizons indispensable to governance around CARPE objectives and outputs. This platform has enabled the team to capitalize on the contributions from some very influential actors who have leverage in decision-making circles. Partners come together, discuss the context and the implementation of the programme, its strengths and weaknesses as well as avenues to be explored. All the appointed members were chosen for their potential to contribute and their added value. The Country Team is a driving force, a melting pot of ideas and a facilitator of discussions.

Achieving acceptance of CARPE and its objectives

During Phase IIa, the programme was neither well perceived nor understood by the Government. It was viewed with much suspicion, as something from the Americans, and what was being done in the landscape was shrouded in obscurity. But the Country Team has made it possible for there to be a rapprochement not only with the government (the Ministry of environment), but also with other government agencies and other institutions such as the Presidency and Parliament. Through their representation in the Country Team which facilitates information sharing, and especially as a result of seeing the actual activities undertaken, the reputation of the programme has been enhanced and CARPE is now well accepted. Relations with the government and especially the Ministry of Forestry have improved significantly. Members thus recruited undertake advocacy and lobbying for the programme and its objectives. Everybody has understood that the CARPE's mission is first and foremost to facilitate conservation and the development of the Congolese people.

The principle of member-driven

The Country Team facilitates a sense of ownership and capacity building amongst its members. The sense of ownership is nurtured by allowing participation in sessions to identify and plan the programme's strategic activities, and in core discussions on the programme. Capacity building occurs by the mere fact that participants are involved in the planning forum of USAID/CARPE. This principle allows for the validation of the planning matrix in relation to annual priorities and allows for judgment to be passed on the evolution of the project.

Communication amongst members should be developed

Communication is an important element within the Country Team especially as it only meets formally twice a year. Although a certain amount of information sharing already takes place, much effort is nonetheless required to improve communication both laterally and horizontally within the Country Team. It would be good for members to know what activities are taking place in each other's institutions and organizations, but the Team also needs to find ways of regularly keeping all members informed on progress made on the evolution of activities and also giving them vital information on monitoring governance and on identifying priorities within the context of the government's priority actions.

The need for preparatory technical meetings

The whole area of forest and natural resource governance is very dynamic. New facts and information are emerging all the time that require consultation, analysis and a jointly prepared response. This is the case with the texts under preparation on local community forests, for validation under the Forestry Code. A meeting bringing together strategic members of the Country Team was held and, after heated discussions, a common position was adopted. But in practice, since all members are not available at all times, there have been very few meetings of the kind especially for ongoing processes of the law in the

country. Efforts will be made to have extraordinary sessions to focus on events that come up that are unforeseen but nonetheless must be followed up.

Motivation of Country Team members

The work of the Country Team is time-consuming for its partners (participating in meetings, carrying out activities, reacting to produce the MOV). This fact, and acknowledging the quality of the members facilitating the implementation of the programme, have made the subject of motivation of members come to the fore. It is accepted that, besides current allowances, a mechanism needs to be found to pay members for activities carried out within the framework of the programme.

Strengthening civil society

The Coalition of eight Networks of national environmental NGOs is a member of the CARPE Country Team. It has a strategic vision, strategic plan and work plan with actions covering three CARPE intermediary outputs and touching on various environmental themes including governance. Its functioning is greatly handicapped by a lack of operational capacity. More resources should be raised in addition to those awarded by the Small Grants Scheme to further support the operational capacity of the coalition. The Country Team has made a start by helping provide the coalition with a vision, a critical analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, a strategic plan and a work plan, and a legalized statute for its legal recognition.

Chapter 7

THE USE OF SMALL GRANTS TO BUILD CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY TO SUPPORT CONSERVATION

The Use of Small Grants to Build Civil Society Capacity to Support Conservation : Lessons Learned from the CARPE Program

Nicodème Tchamou



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CARPE

The Use of Small Grants to Build Civil Society Capacity to Support Conservation : Lessons Learned from the CARPE Program

Nicodème Tchamou



Introduction

Central Africa contains the second largest area of contiguous moist tropical forest in the world. More than 80 million people that live in the forested region depend on their rich forests and other biotic resources for their livelihoods and economic development. The Central African forests form the catchment basin of the Congo River, a watershed of local, regional and global significance. The forest also provides valuable ecological services by controlling and buffering climate at a regional scale, and by absorbing and storing excess carbon dioxide released from the burning of fossil fuels, helping to slow the rate of global warming. Nonetheless, the forest is subject to many threats, including slash-and-burn agriculture, indiscriminate harvesting for fuel wood and charcoal production, poaching and logging. All these threats are derived from an underlying factor – human survival. Mitigating these threats is a challenge that goes beyond national boundaries

to require regional and international mobilization.

A principal strategy of the Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) for creating sustainable natural resource management (NRM) practices in the field is to implement a “People-Centred Approach” to conservation in the field and to foster improved environmental governance in the region. Strengthening local NGOs has been a long-standing CARPE strategy since its inception in 1995.

Conservation efforts will not be sustainable without a strong constituency within civil society as well as government. Hence, CARPE has, since its inception, devised and implemented a small grants component as a mechanism to build civil society capacity to: a) mobilize national and regional constituents to advocate for a strong regulatory framework for good NRM practices; b) engage in robust dialogue with governments to reform forest management policies through the application of empirical data from landscape pro-

grammes and field research; c) promote livelihood and income-generating activities in a rural setting; and d) integrate gender considerations into conservation strategies and policies.

The IUCN Small Grants Program, funded by CARPE, acknowledges that painstaking effort is required to build local NGO capacity, but after ten years of consistent support to NGOs, it is clear that the results are exceptional and far-reaching. This document is a synthesis of lessons learned from six country case studies. It distils some of the major accomplishments of the small grants programme as a way of illustrating what has been learned from these years of experience in 1) empowering civil society to advocate for and contribute to sustainable NRM through the promotion of laws and policy reform; 2) supporting livelihood activities that reduce threats to natural resources; 3) laying the foundations for a stable partnership amongst a multitude of stakeholders for forest conservation in the region; and 4) integrating gender considerations into conservation strategies.

What is CARPE?

The USAID Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) is a 20-year US Government (USG) commitment to help reduce the rate of forest degradation and loss of biodiversity through increased local, national and regional NRM capacity in nine countries of the Congo Basin. CARPE is the principal USG contribution to the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), established at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. CARPE partners aim to apply and implement sustainable NRM practices in the field, improve environmental governance in the region, and strengthen natural resource monitoring capacity. To achieve its goal, the CARPE strategy comprises three integrated elements; three pillars called the intermediate results framework¹ :

- 1) Natural resources managed sustainably, or the landscape programme;
- 2) Natural resources governance strengthened (institutions, policies, laws) known as the

- programme for good governance; and
- 3) Natural resources monitoring institutionalized, or the monitoring and evaluation programme.

The CARPE approach to small grants

Conserving the tropical forest of Central Africa is a challenge beyond the capacity of national governments, individual donors or international organizations alone. A network of actors working in concert, including national and local civil society, is essential if CARPE's goals are to be attained. However, when CARPE started in 1995, NRM capacity within civil society was all but non-existent (Pielemeier et al., 2006). The first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 inspired the first local conservation NGOs in Central Africa. Before then, one-party governments had frowned on any organization or association which seemed to pose a threat to State authority or influence. Governments believed that only they could solve the problems facing their country and their people. This centralization of power reduced people's enthusiasm for self-help groups, which often developed into NGOs.

Notwithstanding, CARPE in its design strategy posited that the long-term sustainability of conservation efforts was impossible without the strong empowerment and involvement of civil society. Hence, since its inception, the programme has taken two approaches to building civil society capacity: 1) support to the CEFDHAC (*Conférence sur les Ecosystèmes Forestiers Denses et Humides d'Afrique Centrale*) process which started in 1995 to provide an opportunity for the nascent Central African civil society to gain access to a platform for international and regional discourse on environment and to get their voices heard; and 2) implementation of a small grants programme in six Central African countries with the main objectives over the first five years (1998–2002) of: a) building institutional and human resource capacity amongst civil society organizations for NRM through a sort of learning-

¹ See page 5 of the CARPE Performance and Monitoring Plan (PMP).

by-doing process; b) increasing Central African participation in CARPE activities and encourage their buy-in; c) raising local awareness of CARPE by providing information about CARPE objectives and strategies; and d) raising awareness of gender considerations. In the course of these five years, approximately 80 small grants were awarded (worth an average of US\$8000 each) through a system of proposal submission and review. Screening proposals was a two-stage process: first a national review by the country Focal Points, followed by final approval from the regional office. Preparation of proposals and their subsequent evaluation were based on two pages of general guidelines with intensive exchanges between the CARPE Focal Points and the potential grantees to fine-tune the content of proposals. Awarded grants focused on small-scale research and field studies, seminars and workshops, education and sensitization, training sessions, policy studies and publications. The average project duration was five months.

In 2003, CARPE moved (Phase I to II) towards a much larger field operational presence in response to the USG-initiated CBFP. Phase II was designed based on the increased USG knowledge of Central African institutions, forests and biodiversity gathered from the Phase I experience. The operations of the small grants programme evolved in this new context to capitalize on the civil society capacity developed over the first five years. This allowed the small grants to become more focused as a mechanism to mobilize and motivate civil society to advocate for good governance in the forestry sector, foster economic growth to improve local livelihoods, and integrate gender consideration into conservation activities.

During this phase, grants have been awarded to local NGO networks, community-based organizations (CBOs) and local associations based on a “new” comprehensive manual of policy and procedures² that set the rules and regulations including environmental compliance, monitoring and evaluation. The amount of each grant has in-

creased substantially to an average of US\$30,000 and the average project duration is one year. This increase reflects the increased capacity of the recipient NGOs. Proposal selection still involves two steps: the first step is at the country level led by the national CARPE Focal Point charged with coordinating a multi-actor National Steering Committee. Proposals shortlisted at the country level are sent to a Regional Steering Committee for a final decision. Once the grant is awarded, its implementation is monitored by the Focal Points and results are included in the CARPE overall reporting system.

On-the-ground impact of the Small Grants Program

The implementation of the Small Grants Program over the past 12 years has yielded substantial results, exceeding expectations in several ways: a) civil society is much better organized and mobilized for advocating common interest policy reforms and/or implementation of good governance in the forestry and NRM sector; b) the promotion of economic growth and social welfare activities within communities is greatly enhanced; and c) the integration of gender considerations into NRM and forest conservation has been given a great deal of attention.

Civil society mobilization and advocacy for policy reform and good governance

Critical threats to the integrity of forest resources in Central Africa are primarily from small-scale slash-and-burn agriculture, illegal and unsustainable forest harvest operations and general ignorance of the consequences of unsustainable practices and viable alternatives. Dealing with these threats at the local level is difficult and awkward to manage for both government administrations and international NGOs. However, in many cases, local NGOs and CBOs, empowered by small grants, have shown outstanding responses

² See the IUCN/CARPE small grant policy and procedure manual at http://carpe.umd.edu/resources/Documents/IUCN_small_grant_policy_and_procedure_manual_EN.pdf.

in addressing this challenge.

When the Small Grants Program started in DRC in 2000, the country was just emerging from a long period of instability and had neither a forestry code nor an environmental code. *Decrees, arrêtés* and *notes circulaires* regulating forestry activities or environmental compliance were scattered in different offices and ministerial departments, and there was no single resource document that contained the entire regulatory framework for environmental protection. A small grant to a local NGO called “*Avocats Verts*” enabled them to assemble all these decrees and legal regulatory documents into one source book entitled *Recueil des textes juridiques en matière environnementale en République Démocratique du Congo*. This publication set the stage and paved the way for the production and endorsement by the government of the 2002 DRC Forestry Code. Now the same NGO is helping the DRC Ministry of Environment and Nature to draft and promulgate implementing decrees under this new forestry code.

Getting the laws and regulations guiding the use and management of natural resources to the grass-roots communities, particularly women that are intimately involved in managing or extracting these natural resources on a daily basis, is needed if good conservation practices are to be maintained at the grass-roots level, but this poses a massive administrative, logistical and educational challenge. All too often, the laws and regulation documents are available to the elites in cities but are neither known, nor applied in the field by local communities. Even when some of these documents become available in print form, literacy is a barrier. Documents written in French for poor and barely educated people are ineffective. REFADD (*Réseau des Femmes Africaines pour le Développement Durable*), a regional network of a large number of female NGOs, identified this weakness, and through a CARPE small grant decided to take on this challenge. To date, REFADD has translated the entire Forestry Code of DRC into Lingala, the most commonly spoken language in the forested area of the country and have disseminated more than 500 copies of the Code in the Bandundu territories of Lisala and Bongandanga in the Equator province. This acti-

vity triggered international donor interest – SNV, a Dutch organization, then translated the same forestry code into the so-called “Simplified Lingala” and disseminated it widely in the DRC.

In the Ituri Epulu Aru Landscape in DRC, artisanal illegal logging for charcoal production is a principal driver of deforestation. With the help of a small grant, a local NGO called Comité des exploitants et négociants de Mambasa (CENEM) has mobilized these illegal artisanal loggers into formal associations hence providing them with a legal status that has turned their activities into formal operations with all that entails, including obtaining legal logging permits, paying taxes, using operational techniques that are more friendly to the environment, and the production and dissemination of improved stoves to women. This halved the charcoal consumption in the community. The project was so successful that it was extended to the Virunga National Park to address the issue of deforestation due to wood harvesting for charcoal production.

Poaching is a serious threat to biodiversity. Harvesting species from the IUCN “Critically Endangered (CR)” category and/or endemic species is a crime. However, in Central Africa, many poachers are ignorant of the law, and hence cannot be held wholly responsible for their crime. Therefore, following on from its work on disseminating the Forestry Code, REFADD through a small grant mobilized its entire network to promote and disseminate wildlife laws. The wildlife law in DRC was translated into local languages and 1000 copies disseminated. Noticeboards featuring wildlife laws in local languages and pictures of endangered and endemic species were drawn up and posted around protected areas in four of the most forested countries of the Congo Basin (DRC, ROC, Cameroon and CAR). Hunters/poachers were organized into networks and were trained in wildlife laws. Communities were organized into Comités de vigilance in the Ituri area of the DRC (these included local associations, police, government territorial administration officials and judiciary members) for an anti-poaching campaign, a sort of local eco-guard team.

In Cameroon, where a forestry code and associated legal forest regulation frameworks had

been well established for many years, local NGOs, with the help of CARPE small grants, analyzed the constraints of implementing the forestry code at local level, which highlighted and identified gaps between theory and practice. This information then informed new written operational guidelines and implementing texts, essentially with the outcome of empowering the local NGOs to serve as technical advisors to policy and decision makers.

In some countries like Gabon and ROC where NGOs were still very weak and inexperienced, yet established legal frameworks for NRM such the forestry code and the wildlife code were well developed, CARPE small grant funding supported environmental education and the dissemination of legal information governing natural resources. Thus, the Centre d'Actions pour le Développement Durable et l'Environnement (CADDE) received a small grant to set up a botanical sanctuary with a 2km nature trail in the Mondah forest to train secondary school students from Libreville and students from the school of forestry (Cap Esterias) in environmental sciences. Aventures Sans Frontières (ASF) launched a large environmental advocacy campaign through the design and display of photos and images highlighting unsustainable natural resource exploitation in Gabon and its subsequent impacts on wildlife.

The *Association des femmes juristes du Congo*, with a CARPE small grant, produced the first ever Republic of Congo Code de l'environnement. In Gabon, Les Amis du Pangolin (ADP) received a small grant to edit and distribute free of charge several volumes of a regional environmental newspaper, *Le Cri du Pangolin*. Another NGO in ROC, ANN (Alliance Nationale pour la Nature), received a grant to produce and disseminate the first newspaper specializing in environmental issues. The newspaper called *L'araignée* publicized provocative information that mobilized the community to combat wildlife poaching and illegal logging in the Concouati National Park of ROC.

Still in the spirit of getting environmental information to the public, the NGO called *Club des Amis de la Nature de l'université Marien Ngouabi* in 2002 received a grant to establish a "green"

cyber-café in the Brazzaville University campus open to all students and the public, serving as an internet café and interactive information centre for research on forestry and environment to inform and develop future environmental advocates.

In countries like Burundi and Rwanda where forest areas have been almost completely converted into farmland, the small grants have supported a different approach, emphasizing the conservation of the remaining patches of protected areas and the restoration of degraded lands. In Burundi, small grant activities focused on a) building civil society capacity to compile all the laws and regulations guiding the management of protected areas, b) developing advocacy materials such as pamphlets in French as well in local languages and to disseminate these materials to communities living around protected areas, and c) organizing information campaigns to stimulate government members including the national police to enforce the implementation of the country's laws.

The development and promotion of economic growth and social welfare activities within communities

The promotion and development of economic growth and social welfare activities as a natural resource conservation strategy is a fundamental requirement but a substantial challenge for the large international conservation NGOs and government agencies alike. However, civil society in several instances has been able to be effective in this role through the Small Grants Program.

In DRC, the female NGO network REFADD has revived agriculture in the CBFP Maringa Lopori Wamba Landscape, helping a network of 50 local associations composed of about 350 women to organize themselves to plant 300 ha of improved staple food crop varieties. In Gabon, just informing the local communities in the area west of the Minkébé National Park of their rights under the logging concessions' cahiers de charges, has allowed these communities to defend and improve their livelihoods through demanding bene-

fits from the logging companies that are laid down in Gabonese law.

Small grants have enabled civil society organizations to mobilize local communities to seek solutions to various environmental threats such as deforestation for charcoal production. In Rwanda, two local NGOs, SERUKA and AREDI have mobilized the ministry in charge of forests, technicians from the Institut des Sciences Agronomiques, community leaders in three sites and students to develop and put in place a plantation of about four hectares of trees, bamboo and rattan. They have also trained 12 agricultural monitors and 40 student members of the Club de l'Environnement while raising awareness of the threats of unsustainable practices.

In the ROC, an NGO called Association des Femmes Veuves de Fatima (AFVF) has organized itself with the support of a small grant to address the challenge of fuel wood shortage by planting three hectares of fast-growing species such as eucalyptus, while in Burundi, some local NGOs such as Enviro-protect have identified the need for and have promoted more efficient stoves for rural households, as another solution to the same problem. Other successful livelihood activities supported by the Small Grants Program include the promotion of ecotourism and beekeeping.

Integrating gender considerations into conservation strategies

CARPE recognizes the importance of promoting gender equity in its strategy of civil society empowerment. In addition to integrating gender considerations into its overall programme, it has specifically focused efforts on building the capacity of two networks of female NGOs. The network REFADD has had a substantial impact on the management of natural resources in Central Africa by effectively integrating women into NRM policies and activities. REFADD staff have benefited from intensive CARPE mentoring and training. The Centre d'Appui aux Femmes et aux Ruraux (CAFER), a local NGO managed by women, is conducting research on alternatives to slash-and-burn extensive agriculture and unsustainable hunting practices with CARPE small

grant support, a challenge that many international research institutes such as the World Agroforestry Centre (formerly the International Council for Research in Agroforestry – ICRAF), the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) et al. have been working on for years with little effect in the field. These networks of female NGOs are increasingly the voice of all females among the civil society network.

Lessons learned

The CARPE strategy of distributing small grants, first as a tool to strengthen civil society's institutional and human resource capacity for NRM, and second as a mechanism to capitalize on these new capacities to empower civil society for good governance in forest conservation has shown positive results. The Central African landscape has evolved substantially since CARPE began in 1995, and at least some of the socio-political changes can be traced to the Small Grants Program. Today, the emergence of a responsive and accountable civil society that provides serious representation in environmental decision making is widely acknowledged. Civil society opinion now carries some weight in forestry and NRM policy making. While these changes can not be attributed solely to the Small Grants Program, it is reasonable to conclude that the capacity built through the small grants "learning-by-doing" approach over a period of many years has had a major impact on the sector.

Despite the demonstrable impacts shown in these cases, there are still possible improvements suggested by the review and feedback received over the past few years. Experience has shown that the Small Grant Policy and Procedure Manual should be revised to take into consideration some of the concerns of civil society as reflected in the last seven years of implementation.

1. Proposal preparation, screening and award procedures

- a) **Applications for grants should be done in two stages.** The first stage should just entail a project concept, which should only be followed by a full proposal if the Steering

Committee declares the concept worthy of further development. Several complaints have been recorded from civil society organizations about the fact that too much time and energy is devoted to developing a full project proposal for a small grant which may have a low probability of being funded.

- b) **Screening of small grant proposals needs to be transparent.** The system used during CARPE Phase I raised doubts over the transparency of the Small Grants Program. The CARPE Focal Point in each country was solely responsible for the first screening, and the final decision was made at the discretion of the Regional Coordinator. During Phase II the screening process is done at the national level by a national steering committee and the final grant approval made by a regional steering committee, which is perceived as being more transparent and even-handed.
- c) **Accountability in the use of small grant funds by civil society is greatly improved through close technical support from the Focal Points and scrutiny by the steering committees.** Embezzlement and misuse of grant funds are common amongst local NGOs. Many of the organizations lack proper accounting and audit systems. Having international NGOs and/or the CARPE Focal Points coach local NGOs as part of the monitoring and evaluation of the grant activities has shown promising results. The Small Grants Program has not encountered the problem of misuse of funds. As further evidence of increased fiscal management capacity, a network of local NGOs in the DRC called CRONE, a group long supported by the DRC CARPE Focal Point, received a grant of US\$150,000 from the World Bank to assist local communities in becoming engaged in logging title conversions. The money was deemed well spent and properly accounted for, which is considered a result of the mentorship provided by the CARPE Focal Point.
- d) **Providing grants to networks of local or regional NGOs has exponential effects.** Environmental problems are of a common nature, both nationally and throughout the Central Africa region. REFADD, a network

of female NGOs active in the four main forested countries of the Congo Basin, has tackled the issue of ignorance of the bushmeat law at the grass-roots level by translating the law into local languages and disseminating the result to local communities. This network approach is efficient and effective.

- e) **Providing grant applicants with feedback on why their proposals were funded or rejected is crucial for civil society capacity building.** In CAR a NGO called CODICOM (Comité pour le Développement Intégré des Communautés de Base) finally succeeded in being awarded a small grant in 2008 after four separate rejections in previous years. Their ultimate success was the result of continuous and long-lasting counselling with specific feedback each year to CODICOM on the weakness of their proposals.

2. Project implementation

- a) **Local NGOs implementing small grant activities need coaching and support.** Most projects that have been completed successfully have required either CARPE Focal Points or international NGO support. In Gabon the local NGO IBONGA-ACPE (Association pour la Connaissance et la Protection de l'Environnement) has been successful in mobilizing communities around the Gamba network of protected areas for ecotourism development mostly because WWF provided them with technical support.
- b) **Tying the Small Grants Program to the CARPE landscape programme has been very important in integrating local associations and CBOs fully into CARPE activities on the ground.** This is the case with IBONGA in the Gamba landscape, REFADD in the Maringa Lopori Wamba, ROSE in the Lobéké and many others. During CARPE Phase I, most of the NGOs that benefited from the Small Grants Program were based in the capital cities.

3. The capacity of small grants to empower civil society

- a) **Local NGOs' ability and credibility when addressing subjects of national interest in the realm of environmental protection and natural resource exploitation has increased with "learning-by-doing" experience and expanded institutional capacity.** Local NGO voices are heard much more than a decade ago. In Gabon for instance they are represented in specific government structures such as the Economic Council of Gabon and the national park system agency, which are political decision-making government institutions. This official recognition has turned civil society organizations into government technical advisors rather than opponents of government per se. In DRC, a local NGO was appointed as a consultative member to the Social and Economic Council of the United Nations (ECODOC) on questions concerning local development. In Cameroon, efforts by civil society to help the ministry to inform policy decisions with empirical information has inspired the Minister of Environment to appoint the CARPE Focal Point as the facilitator to compile civil society inputs in the form of policy briefs to inform the process of revising the 1994 Forestry code.

4. The capacity of small grants to mobilize civil society for advocacy

- a) **Experience of local NGOs in implementing projects and mobilizing public opinion has increased their capacity for more structured advocacy efforts.** In several instances, local NGOs have raised objections to government decisions. In Gabon, the concession to the Belinga iron mine, an environmentally sensitive site surrounded by three national parks (Minkébé, Ivindo and Mwagna), was granted to a Chinese company by the government without any provision for environmental impact assessment. A coalition of Gabonese NGOs advocated very strongly for the government to follow its own environmental laws, with

great success. The government decision was eventually amended and the concession agreement was revised to include measures to mitigate potential negative environmental impacts.

- b) **Governments have grown to respect the voices of NGOs in making development decisions with environmental impacts.** The site chosen by the Gabon government for the construction of a second airport in Libreville was feared by citizens to have substantial negative consequences such as too much noise, impacting on the nearby Akanda National Park, a site internationally well known as a critical nesting site for migrating birds. Additionally, it was feared that the airport would destroy a nearby relic rain forest that serves as a site for practical training for the Cap Esterias forestry school. Again the coalition of local NGOs advocated for a review of the decision, and the government responded by putting the project on hold.
- c) **Strengthened NGOs can play an important role in promoting the "rule of law" by educating citizens on legal requirements and the impacts of illegal NRM activities.** In DRC, REFADD's efforts to disseminate information on relevant laws to local communities, and setting up networks of comités de vigilance have achieved concrete results. Local communities have reported eight cases of wildlife poaching and/or trafficking to the police, and the poachers and traffickers were prosecuted and fined. This outcome was unprecedented in DRC and it shows how small grants, by building civil society capacity and providing some funding for specific activities, can be effective tools for law enforcement as well as compliance.

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Case study 1 - The Use of Small Grants to Build Civil Society Capacity to Support Conservation : Lessons Learned from Cameroon

Antoine Justin Eyébé



Objectives of the IUCN Small Grants Program

The IUCN Small Grants Program, funded by the Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE), has strengthened the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in sustainable forest management. Their role is very important in implementing CARPE's Strategic Objective which is to reduce the rate of deforestation and loss of biodiversity in Central Africa. Moreover, civil society will play a leading role in promoting good governance in natural resource management – a pivotal component of the CARPE Phase II Results Framework.

After the Rio Conference in 1992, the importance of CSOs in Cameroon was recognized because they were considered by members of the Government and other international partners as catalysts for local, national and international development. However, despite this trend, some

forest dwellers were increasingly disappointed because they still felt excluded. For instance, they resented the fact that the benefits they received from the forest were insignificant compared to those received by other forest exploiters, notably logging and mining concessions. Due to this imbalance between stakeholders, it became very important to design appropriate strategies to facilitate their involvement. Hence, CSOs opted to make them aware of the existing legal and policy frameworks, and how these could better serve the interests of local populations. However, they noticed that this could only be effective if they were supported technically, administratively and financially.

CARPE has been very supportive to CSOs because of their potential key role in improving natural resource management in the region. The Small Grants Program has supported, both technically and financially, a wide range of micro-projects submitted by local NGOs in areas where they either had a comparative advantage in im-

plementing them or needed the necessary capacity to improve natural resource management. These micro-projects focused on themes such as understanding the local context of natural resource management, improving transparency in the forestry sector, combating illegal logging and poaching, enhancing knowledge of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in order to improve livelihoods, assessing the Cameroon logging industry, etc. These projects required precepts which could fill the gaps in the activities of some of CARPE's international partners such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) which receives funds from CARPE to implement the "Sustainable natural resource management practices applied" component in two landscapes in south-east Cameroon. In general the Small Grants Program targets the following groups: community-based organizations (CBOs) and associations, local populations, research institutions and students. The objectives of the Small Grants Program include :

- U Filling gaps in conservation's analytical agenda such as designing a suitable mechanism to provide feedback to local communities on conservation strategies, exchanges of field experiences, and success stories between and within landscapes;
- U Promoting and building a constituency for conservation among civil society;
- U Fostering partnerships between landscape consortia and local civil society in the field;
- U Enabling Central African institutions to participate in CARPE activities in order to ensure host country "buy-in" of conservation initiatives;
- U Reinforcing the capacities of local civil society in institutional development and strategic planning to sustain CARPE activities and objectives in the region in the long term;
- U Effectively integrating CARPE activities in the field with host country institutions;
- U Fostering gender equity through the promotion of female-based community organizations and associations;
- U Raising local, national and regional awareness of CARPE and therefore providing

knowledge and support to the programme objectives.

Implementation strategy and results achieved

A small grant policy and procedure manual has been prepared¹. Grants are awarded, after a two-tier selection process, to local NGOs working within the framework of the natural resources governance strengthened components. The first level of selection is organized at the country level by the CARPE Focal Point who coordinates the National Steering Committee. Shortlisted proposals are sent to the Regional Steering Committee for a final decision. In both the National and Regional Committees, CARPE staff members play a strictly neutral role as they guide participants of the group to better understand the programme's vision, objectives and priorities.

Since 1998, about 50 projects have been funded by the Small Grants Program in two key areas: a) research and b) the natural resource policy and legal framework.

Research has mostly focused on non-timber forest products (NTFPs) as a means to improve the livelihoods of millions of forest dwellers. The research topics included :

- the importance of forest resources used by local communities;
- field testing and training in a methodology for the socio-economic valuation of NTFPs;
- state-of-the-knowledge studies of specific NTFPs such as *Tabernanthe iboga* Baillon, *Prunus africana*, *Gnetum africanum* and *G. buchholzianum*, threatened with extinction by unsustainable harvest techniques;
- the establishment of a gene bank of *Gnetum* spp. in Limbe Botanical Garden;
- production and dissemination by the National Herbarium of three volumes of Cameroon flora presenting Orchidaceae and Dichapetalaceae;
- the role of community institutions in the ma-

¹ See CARPE website for copies of the manual in English and in French – <http://carpe.umd.edu/Plone/resources/smallgrants>.

agement of NTFPs to highlight restrictions and rights in their harvest at the local level, and the co-existence of customary rules with legal regulatory frameworks;

- the promotion of gender equity with the creation of the network of women for the sustainable management of the Central African moist forests – one of the dynamic CEFDHAC (Conférence sur les Ecosystèmes de Forêts Denses et Humides d’Afrique Centrale) networks;
- alternatives to slash-and-burn agriculture and unsustainable hunting practices.

On the natural resource management front, activities were geared towards discussions between field researchers and policy makers on the theme “conserving and managing biodiversity in central Africa: global challenges and local solutions” to ensure that policy decisions are based on empirical data and on international conventions. After this general framework, small projects tackled specific issues such as: a) constraints in implementing the regulatory framework on timber exploitation in Cameroon based on the 1994 Cameroon Forestry Code and its 1995 implementation decrees; b) mapping the hunting practices and circulation of wildlife products along the Moloundou-Bertoua-Yaoundé road to establish a geographical information system database on the exploitation and circulation of wildlife products; c) contribution to the revision of the regulation related to the management of incomes from logging and hunting activities, with a view to improving the livelihoods of communities living around the exploited forest area; and d) constraints related to wildlife law enforcement.

Lessons learned

The procedures

- The manual is essential in helping civil society identify and write sound project proposals that meet CARPE’s requirements.
- Although it may sound lengthy, the two-tier selection process (National and Regional Steering Committees) is key for transparency which in turn is key for conflict mitigation.

- Involving other donors in the National Steering Committee for proposal selection is essential because it avoids duplication of funding and creates synergy among donors.

Implementation

- Flexible in nature, the small grant projects have covered a wide range of activities, all relevant to CARPE’s overall strategic objectives, such as biological research, community mobilization, livelihood improvement, good governance etc.
- Because CSOs are the centrepiece of the Small Grants Program, their success in implementing field activities can only be effective if they receive outside technical and financial support, something which the CARPE Focal Points have been focusing on.
- The Small Grants Program is an effective tool to bridge the gap between activities executed within the landscape and those at the community level. One concrete example is as follows: the Gene Bank that was set up in 2000 is still producing seedlings for the domestication of endangered wild plant species which are unsustainably harvested in the landscapes.

Positive and negative impacts of the Small Grants Program

- The Cameroon Government is making the effort to incorporate results from the small grant activities into decision making. Part of the decision to review the Cameroon Forestry Code of 1994 was triggered by civil society advocacy initiatives.
- The Small Grants Program is an efficient way to foster gender equity because it has led to the creation of a regional network of women for the conservation and sustainable use of forest ecosystems. This network has been able to translate the Forestry Code into local languages and disseminate it to local communities, especially the section on wildlife management and poaching in the entire forest zone of the Congo basin.

- Funds received by NGOs are mostly targeted towards short-term activities (one year maximum), thereby restricting their opportunities for long-term commitment to action in the field.
 - Dissemination of the results of small grant activities tends to be confined to the geographical area covered by projects hence there is an urgent need for the Focal Point to help package and disseminate the results throughout the entire country (to decision makers, donors, etc.).
 - Though CARPE has been encouraging local NGOs to work in networks to maximize their impacts on the ground, only one (Réseau Femme Africaine pour le Développement Durable (REFADD)) project was submitted by a coalition or network of NGOs, showing that individualism still prevails in civil society in the Congo Basin.
 - Although CBOs that operate in the landscape have a good grasp of the local and field context, they lack the capacity to develop sound proposals to compete for the small grants; hence, there is still a tendency for most of the small grant funding to go to NGOs based in large cities, managed by elites.
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Case study 2 - The Use of Small Grants to Build Civil Society Capacity to Support Conservation : Lessons Learned from Rwanda

Thaddée Habiambere



Objectives of the IUCN Small Grants Program

The overall objective of the IUCN Small Grants Program funded by CARPE is to build the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to enable them to mobilize themselves more effectively and to support advocacy for rational management of natural resources in the Congo Basin.

Since CARPE began operating in Central Africa, several national NGOs have received small grants from this programme. Details of two recent projects (2007–2008) are described below, to illustrate the lessons learned from this programme. These are the “Domestic Production of Bamboo and Rattan” project, carried out in three sectors located close to the Nyungwe National Park in the Nyaruguru District in the South Province; and the “Support for the Makera gallery forest conservation efforts” project in the Kirehe

District in the West Province.

Domestic production of bamboo and rattan

The Nyungwe natural forest, recently designated the third National Park in the country, has suffered widespread destruction caused mainly by the harvesting of bamboo and rattan by the local population from the surrounding areas. The products derived from these two species are commonly used in the local construction and craft industries. Trade in these products has increased since the war and the genocide that took place in the country. This has been to the detriment of sustainable conservation of the Nyungwe forest.

The overall objective of this project was to reduce the negative impacts on the environment resulting from the wanton exploitation of bamboo and rattan in the Nyungwe natural forest. It was implemented by the local NGO “Seruka” (the Association for Promoting the Active Contribution of

Rwandan Women to Development).

Support for the Makera gallery forest conservation efforts

The overall objective of this project was to put in place an appropriate platform for the sustainable conservation of this forest by involving the local population, local government services and environmental experts. It was implemented by the local NGO “AREDI” (*Association Rwandaise pour l’Environnement et le Développement Intégré*).

This small forest (74 ha) is one of the gallery forests in the eastern part of the country that up until now has managed to maintain its integrity almost intact in spite of the multiple threats that it faces. It is surrounded by very poor communities, including those repatriated or chased away from neighbouring Tanzania, who have no adequate means of subsistence and not enough arable farmland.

There are a number of problems threatening the integrity of the Makera gallery forest. One is the destruction of crops by the wild animals that it harbours. This arouses the anger of the local populations who complain that the local authority favours and protects wild animals at the expense of human beings. Another threat is the shortage of wood (for energy, construction, crafts, etc.) in the area surrounding the forest. Local people are sometimes tempted to exploit the forest in order to satisfy their need for timber and non-timber forest products, even though there is a protection regime (game wardens) in place.

Implementation strategy and results achieved

Domestic production of bamboo and rattan

The following four expected outputs were selected for this project :

- o Twenty officials and opinion leaders, 40 major bamboo and rattan users (young house builders, makers of household uten-

sils, etc.) and 600 conservation activists living in the three sectors surrounding the Nyungwe forest are made aware of the magnitude of the negative impacts on the environment caused by the wanton exploitation of bamboo and rattan in this natural forest.

- o The 600 conservation activists of Nyaruguru are trained in small-scale growing and exploitation of bamboo and rattans;
- o These activists commit themselves to growing bamboo and rattan and to ensuring that 60 hectares of bamboo and rattan farms will be developed on 12 target sites before the end of the project.
- o Monitoring and coordination of activities are carried out thanks to a strong organizational structure with sound bodies responsible for decision making, implementation and financial auditing.

The following achievements are worth mentioning :

- U Awareness raising: Using individual visits and group meetings, the Forestry unit of the Ministry in charge of forestry (MINITERE), local authority and technical personnel at all levels, the bamboo research unit at the Institute of Agronomic Sciences of Rwanda (ISAR) as well as opinion leaders within the populations of the three sectors, were all made aware of the rationale of the project, its objectives and their need to collaborate;
- U Training: Twelve agricultural instructors (four per sector) were recruited and trained for six days on the growing of bamboo and rattan (in nurseries and then plantations), and on the laws governing environmental conservation and management.
- U Establishment of nurseries: A nursery for the production of deep-rooted bamboo cuttings was developed in each of the three sectors of the project (see Table 1).
- U Engagement of local communities : There has been a massive demand for the bamboo and rattan shoots produced in the nurseries, but due to a lack of availability, only 564 people from the three sectors have so far been declared eligible to receive a certain number of these shoots for planting.

Table 1. The number of cuttings planted and available for cultivation, as of October 2008

Sector (site)	Number of beds developed	Number of cuttings planted	Number of shoots that sprouted	Number of shoots that didn't survive	Number of shoots available for planting
Nyabimata	36	16,854	6,989	6,367	622
Muganza	37	16,008	4,043	2,683	1,360
Ruheru	33	16,757	2,153	1,773	380
TOTAL	106	49,619	13,185	10,823	2,362



Mihanda nursery in the Samiyonga Cell, Muganza Sector (left); Gatare nursery in Nyabimata Cell, Nyabimata (right)

Support for the Makera gallery forest conservation efforts

The following three expected outputs were selected for this project :

- o A workshop is organized to validate the action plan drawn up by the project, bringing together representatives of the Mpamga

sector, of the Kirehe District, of the Pupils' Environment Club of the Nyawera School, local NGOs, ISAR researchers and the CARPE Focal Point, amongst others.

- o A nursery of forest plants is developed and placed under the responsibility of the Nyawera/Nasho Primary School.

- o Equipment and materials (microphones and loudspeakers, etc.) are put at the disposal of the Pupils' Environment Club and teachers of the local primary school.

The following achievements are worth mentioning :

- U Establishment of a nursery: An agroforestry nursery was developed near the Nyawera Primary School and the day-to-day management (watering) was entrusted to the pupils under the supervision of a technical staff member recruited by the project. Various agroforestry species were sown as seedlings (*Grevillea robusta*, *Calliandra calothyrsus*, *Markhamia* sp., etc.). 18,000 seedlings produced in the nursery were specifically planted in the primary school farm over a surface area of about 4 hectares and each pupil has planted 20 trees that he/she has to care for.



The nursery while under development. The seedlings inside are still at an early stage of cultivation

Table 2. Seedlings produced in the nursery

Species	Number of seedlings
<i>Grevillea robusta</i>	18,000
<i>Cedrella serrata</i>	2,500
<i>Jacaranda mimosaeifolia</i>	5,500
<i>Sena siamea</i>	1,500
<i>Sena spectabilis</i>	4,500
TOTAL	32,000

- U Establishment of a school club : A Friends of the Environment Club was formed, made up of 40 pupils of the school supervised by their teachers, and it is raising awareness of the conservation of the Makera gallery forest especially through songs, poems, dances and games.



Pupils of the Club are in white T-shirts, singing and dancing

- U Distribution of equipment and materials: Seeds, watering cans, shovels, hoes, plastic bags for the nurseries, T-shirts, etc.) were distributed to members of the Friends of the Environment Club.
- U Development of an action plan: An action plan for the conservation of the Makera gallery forest was drawn up for the period 2009–2013.



Lessons learned

Rwanda is a densely populated country with around 9.7 million inhabitants over an area of about 27,000 km² (close to 360 inhabitants/km²) in 2008¹. Potential forestland is estimated at a total of 190,000 ha of which 140,000 ha could be used for agroforestry and 50,000 ha for traditional reforestation. Meanwhile, the existing forested area, including dense montane natural forests, eastern natural formations, plantations and potential reforestation and forestation zones, is 888,660 ha.

In spite of their apparently small contribution to the country's economy, the important role played by forests in the country is unquestionable. Wood is the household fuel of the great majority of the population. Also, forests contribute in terms of incomes derived from job creation for rural people.

After the 1994 war, the appearance of the forested land has changed somewhat given that it is estimated that 15,000 ha of plantation forest were destroyed while 35,000 ha were seriously damaged.

The result is an acute need for reforestation and afforestation. Thanks to the Small Grants Program, the two projects described above have contributed to this need by helping local communities to reforest 60 ha of bamboo, and encouraging 40 primary school pupils to plant 18,000 seedlings of five different tree species on four hectares of land. If guided well by their teachers, these pupils represent an important long-term potential in the field of forest conservation.

Conclusion

The potential for the Small Grants Program to help mobilize CSOs, build capacity and raise awareness of issues of sustainable management of natural resources is obvious. In the case of Rwanda, the crucial problem of management of natural resources is the loss of forest cover through deforestation and soil degradation. Sustained activities such those of the above-mentioned two environmental NGOs can slow down or

reverse the trend of forest cover destruction, the main objective of CARPE in Central Africa. Therefore, the IUCN Small Grants Program should be reinforced and the size of grant per project increased to overcome constraints such as the massive and increasing demand for bamboo and rattan shoots in the Nyaruguru District in Rwanda.

¹ World Bank. (2008). *World Development Indicators*. Washington DC: World Bank.

Case study 3 - The Use of Small Grants to Build Civil Society Capacity to Support Conservation : Lessons Learned from Republic of Congo

Marcelin Agnagna



Objectives of the IUCN Small Grants Program

The history of the Small Grants Program in the Republic of Congo is recent and essentially coincides with the opening of the CARPE Congo National Office in May 2006 (although before this date, three local NGOs did receive grants through one of CARPE's partners, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)).

The objectives of the Small Grants Program in the Republic of Congo are as follows :

1. To promote and create a forum to support conservation within civil society;
2. To build the capacity of civil society in institutional development and strategic planning, prerequisites to the sustainability of CARPE activities and objectives in the region;
3. To promote social wellbeing through the development of income-generating activities;
4. Effectively to mainstream CARPE activities into the institutions of the host country;
5. To identify natural resource management policies that require national advocacy for their reform or formulation;
6. To raise awareness at local, national as well as regional levels on issues of forest good governance;
7. To encourage gender equality.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Republic of Congo are weak and the Small Grants Program is of crucial importance in raising awareness amongst CSOs of their place and role in the management of natural resources. Progress in mobilizing and motivating local NGOs has been significant over the last two years, despite the rather small amounts allocated by this programme. Remarkable actions can be carried out with very little financial resources, if measured by their actual impact on communities. Identifying priorities is fundamental to this approach. In the Republic of Congo, 11 local NGOs have so

far received small grants to develop activities at a national level as well as within and around landscapes. These activities include :

- In 2000, the ANN NGO (Alliance Nationale pour la Nature) produced and disseminated the first ever specialist newspaper on environmental issues in the Republic of Congo, called L'Araignée (The Spider) to inform, raise awareness and carry on advocacy;
- In 2002, the Association of Female Jurists (l'Association des femmes juristes) of Congo produced the first-ever volume of the Environment Code of the Republic of Congo, a document that, to this day, continues to answer some of the deficits concerning availability of national instruments on environmental protection;
- Also in 2002, the association called Club des Amis de la Nature established, within the University of Marien Ngouabi, a Green cybercafé that is an interactive reference centre for access to environmental data and information;
- Between 2006 and 2008, various local NGOs and associations submitted project proposals for various activities in rural areas, and were successful in receiving funding. They included: ACNL (*Association pour la Conservation de la Nature de la Likouala*), ADECOR (*Association pour le Développement des Communautés Rurales*), AEV (*Assainissement Eau et Vie*), APETDS (*Association pour la Protection des Ecosystèmes Tropicaux et Développement de la Sangha*), ARDN (*Association pour la Réflexion au Développement du Nord-Congo*), CFC (*Conservation de la Faune Congolaise*) and ECOTOUR (*Ecologie Conservation Tourisme*). There were 10 project proposals in all :

1) Support for the promotion of peasant beekeeping in the villages of Likouala using grass, around the Community Reserve of Lake Télé, Likouala District (CFC);

2) Awareness-raising campaign for the prevention of haemorrhagic fever from the Ebola Virus, Sangha District (APETDS);

3) Promotion and development of village beekeeping among the local population of Motaba, Likouala District (ACNL);

4) Planting eucalyptus to satisfy fuelwood needs in the periphery of the Inoni Village, Batéké Plateau District (Association des Femmes Veuves de Fatima);

5) Support for alternative livelihood strategies for the Noumbi communities (Conkouati-Douli National Park), Kouilou District (ADECOR);

6) Monitoring, evaluating and determining the physico-chemical and bacteriological quality of water resources in the two water catchments of the Noumbi and Conkouati Rivers in the Kouilou District (AEV);

7) Contribution towards forest conservation by moving towards sedentary rather than shifting cultivation of plantains in the Mokeko District (ARDN);

8) Preparing village communities living around the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park for the promotion and development of ecotourism, Sangha District (ECOTOUR);

9) Helping conserve biodiversity through the development of alternative activities and the popularization of legal instruments on environmental management (ADECOR);

10) Preparing the village communities of Ngombe and Pokola for the management of revenues derived from logging and for carrying out community projects.

All these projects have been fully or partially implemented.

We are going to take three of them as references to illustrate the lessons learnt :

- Supporting alternative livelihood strategies for the Noumbi communities (Conkouati-Douli National Park), developed by ADECOR;
- Planting eucalyptus to satisfy fuelwood needs in the periphery of the Inoni village in

the Batéké Plateau, developed by the Association des Femmes Veuves de Fatima.

- Preparing the village communities around the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park for the promotion and development of ecotourism, developed by ECOTOUR.

Alternative livelihood strategies for the Noumbi communities

The NGO ADECOR has twice received IUCN small grants, in 2006 and 2008. The Noumbi communities project was initiated because of observations by researchers from the WCS Conkouati Project as well as complaints from fishermen about the drop in the quantity of catches and the quality of shrimps found in the Noumbi River and the Conkouati Lagoon. Fishing for shrimps is one of the main income-generating activities in the surrounding communities of the Noumbi River. The shrimps fished in the zone are regularly taken to Pointe-Noire the second largest city in Congo. Various trading activities have developed around this activity, with a stream of vehicles supplying the population with manufactured products from the city and taking back to Pointe-Noire shrimps and other products derived from fishing, hunting and gathering. A significant amount of money circulates in the zone thanks to this trade engendered mostly by the production of shrimps. Unfortunately for these populations, the catch of shrimps has gradually been decreasing year after year. It has become necessary to look for alternatives to shrimp fishing in order for the people to continue to survive and maintain the level of trade without which the communities would be without resources. ADECOR has therefore undertaken to bring together some fishermen and retrain them for other activities such as market gardening, and rearing goats and poultry. To begin with, just one group of former shrimp fishermen successfully took up market gardening and, with support from ADECOR, were able to produce products such as tomatoes, garden eggs, peppers and other vegetables, and supply them to Pointe-Noire markets. Incomes derived from these activities had a trickle-down effect on other former fishermen. There are now three groups of market gardeners, producing many different types of vegetables for the Pointe-Noire market. This ex-

perience highlights the capacity of some local NGOs, such as ADECOR, to produce results that are beyond expectations and even beyond the capacities of some international NGOs, and this, with very limited resources.

Planting eucalyptus for fuelwood in the Batéké Plateau

Another rich learning experience is that of the Association des Femmes Veuves de Fatima that is tackling the thorny problem of fuel wood in the Batéké Plateau. In fact, the Batéké Plateau District, which is mostly savannah, is facing accelerated degradation of the precious pockets of forest that are found along its waterways because of deforestation caused by the harvesting of firewood and shifting cultivation. The Association des Femmes Veuves de Fatima, having become aware of the situation, wanted to help the people of the plateau not only to meet their needs in terms of firewood but also to slow down the degradation of these pockets of forest. Thus a plantation of about three hectares of eucalyptus was created in the savannah in the neighbouring villages of Inoni. This initiative, though modest, has had a very positive impact in the area to the extent that it serves as inspiration to other associations and individuals, such as the Poumako, Odziba and Mâ communities that have started village eucalyptus plantations with the support of the John Aspinall Foundation (Lesio-Louna Gorilla Protection Project). The John Aspinall Foundation and the Lesio-Louna Gorilla Protection Project have identified the replanting of fast-growing tree species as a priority action to be promoted in the communities living in the Batéké Plateau. This project is in line with one of the strategic objectives of CARPE – reduction of the rate of deforestation. Here the immediate result is not measured in terms of timber production but more in terms of community awareness of the need to reforest and of the threat of deforestation, which may put the availability of water resources at risk. This project, funded under the 2006–2007 Small Grants Program, needs to be continued.



Creation of a eucalyptus plantation in Inoni (Widows of Fatima)

Preparing communities around Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park for ecotourism

The NGO ECOTOUR for its part was inspired by the experience of WCS that is experimenting with ecotourism in the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park. This WCS experiment has attracted some European tourism operators who regularly bring in visitors to the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park. Some hundreds of tourists visit the National Park each year, passing through the village of Bomassa. The income generated from this experimental ecotourism is very encouraging, and part of this income is paid to the Park's neighbouring communities. However, although this experiment has been going on for more than three years already, it has not been able to involve the communities, that watch, from a distance, the coming and going of tourists without any real possibilities of taking part in the activity. The promoter of the experimental tourism has not been able to involve the local communities. However, Bomassa

is the gateway into the Park and it is not acceptable that the local people do not have any contact with, and do not benefit from, foreigners visiting their territory.

The NGO ECOTOUR has understood this shortcoming and has proposed to engage the communities around Bomassa and to help develop their skills so that they can benefit from ecotourism by offering the visitors various tourist products that they have made. In order to implement this initiative, ECOTOUR has applied to the Small Grants Program and received financial assistance. The project is underway in Bomassa and has won over the local people who are fully committed to it. The village elites have been prepared, especially craftsmen and cultural leaders who will henceforth present their products and activities to the tourists. A culture and tourism centre has been set up to exhibit works of art and to put cultural activities (such as traditional dance). The project has been so successful amongst the inhabitants of Bomassa that the new

managers of the WCS Nouabalé-Ndoki Project are proposing to enlarge the facilities initiated by ECOTOUR into a tourism village by adding other facilities. In this case, the Small Grants Program has contributed positively in bringing the CARPE conservation partners and village communities closer together and in changing the hitherto negative attitude of the communities to conservation. It is left for the partners to understand that they cannot continue to ignore village communities; they have to be included when it comes to the management of natural resources. The enhancement of protected areas cannot be effective without the commitment of communities; this project is clear proof of that.

Other projects

The other previously mentioned projects, that were implemented with the help of small grants, also had appreciably successful outcomes. For example, the beekeepers trained in the north of Likouala are producing enough honey for some

of it to be sold on to bigger agglomerations. A litre of pure honey is sold locally for FCFA 1500–2000, about US\$ 4–5.

Lessons learnt

There are many lessons to be learnt from these experiences. They are the first-ever achievements made by local NGOs on the ground using IUCN small grants in Congo. To mention but a few :

- CARPE small grants have contributed something more to the conservation efforts made by our partners on the ground, by encouraging the involvement of local communities hitherto resistant to conservation ideals.
- The projects that have been successful are those that have inspired the communities themselves. Alternatives to harvesting natural resources will only be accepted if they improve on activities already well practised



Harvesting honey in Makao (village beekeeping project, ACNL 2006–2007)

by the local people. Trying to change behaviour and habits through the imposition of new activities has often ended badly.

- Small projects executed with very modest resources can have an appreciable impact on communities, something that some partners have not been able to achieve over many years in spite of the huge resources put at their disposal. In other words, in conservation matters, it does not necessarily take a significant amount of resources to produce significant outcomes.
- Taking into consideration the interests of local communities and satisfying their vital needs is imperative for successful conservation of natural resources.
- In Congo, there is mixed success of conservation projects in view of the huge amounts of money that have been pumped in for more than a decade. Although anti-poaching efforts are continually increasing year in year out, poaching is still on the increase even in areas that are mostly under surveillance. The cause of these failures is found in the old ill-adapted approaches that are still practised on the ground by some international NGOs and other institutions charged with managing conservation projects. The participatory approach is ignored, poorly implemented or still not understood by these actors.
- The activities of CARPE in the Congo have only been appreciated by the general public as a result of the outcomes of the projects funded by the Small Grants Program, and the opening of the National Office, in spite of more than a decade's presence in Central Africa and in Congo. The activities of CARPE's partners have had very little effect on the public.

from these projects have helped improve the image of conservation projects with the public, which other conservationists in the field have been able to capitalize on. That is why we strongly propose that the size of the Small Grants Program be increased in order to perpetuate and capitalize on its achievements. Actions initiated and carried out by local people have a greater effect on village communities. They are worth encouraging and sustaining.

Recommendation

Although considered by some to be only a small sub-programme, the Small Grants Program has demonstrated its importance and efficiency. The activities that have resulted from it are a window through which the general public and local communities can appraise the programme. In a short time and with very few resources, the outcomes

Case study 4 - The Use of Small Grants to Build Civil Society Capacity to Support Conservation : Lessons Learned from Gabon

Constant Allogo



Objectives of the IUCN Small Grants Program

For national NGOs, insufficient financial and technical resources are a serious handicap hampering their development and their participation in national, regional and international efforts for the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources.

In order to address this situation, the Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE), since its launch in 1995, set up a fund through the Small Grants Program for national NGOs with the aim of supporting them directly in their efforts to contribute to the process of rational management and use of Central African forest ecosystems.

In its objectives, CARPE has made environmental governance one of the key avenues for the sustainable and profitable management of natural resources for all. Its founding principle is to involve all stakeholders in the various stages of the decision-making process relating to issues of en-

vironmental governance.

Identifying and putting in place conditions and practices necessary to reduce the rate of deforestation and biodiversity loss in Central Africa is the driving force behind CARPE. To this end, the involvement of all stakeholders, especially civil society, in the management of forests is indispensable. The quality of this involvement is directly related to the technical capacity of NGO leaders.

The support given to national NGOs and other civil society actors is mostly in the form of capacity building, enabling them to better master the problems of natural resource conservation and management. Building the capacity of local NGOs also includes training (of various kinds) for managers as well as the purchase of state-of-the-art working equipment.

Civil society actors

Gabonese civil society has received support from CARPE on several fronts. This support, direct or

indirect, is the outcome of the work of CARPE's partners and it makes visible the work that national NGOs are carrying out on the ground.

Communities living close to protected areas (national parks and reserves) have a huge responsibility in the use of the forest that surrounds them. In as much as these communities can contribute to resource degradation, so too can they take part in their protection.

Thus, in landscapes, CARPE partners, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), have directly (without direct grants) given priority to local communities within the framework of community management of natural resources through the development and promotion of income-generating activities in a bid to arrive at cost-effective management of natural resources. This involvement of local communities is done through raising awareness and providing information while taking into account the potential and specificity of the area.

Around the Lope National Park, communities are organizing themselves to enhance their livelihoods through the development of cultural tourism. In Kasamabika, special emphasis is put on masked traditional dances.

In Ebel Abanga, in the south of the Monts de Cristal National Park, WWF is doing some brainstorming

Within the periphery of the Batéké Plateau National Park, several local community associations have been created and their officials trained. Some of these local associations are developing ecotourism activities based around elephants. After a WCS study of how often elephants visit the bay (shoreline) of the River Mpassa, the local communities decided to open channels along the river in order to enable tourists to visit the shores where a great number of elephants are found. This experience has galvanized the local communities of the Kessala group of villages that presently are still developing ecotourism around the elephant. This activity makes it possible to fight combat elephant hunting and poaching in general. These elephants, thus protected, are more economically profitable for the community concerned alive than dead.

with the local communities on exploiting the manatee for ecotourism purposes.

All of these CARPE initiatives within landscapes are pertinent ways of involving local communities in the management and use of natural resources. Meanwhile, better coordination of the actions of all stakeholders (business operators and the administration) increase the income (still low) generated from these activities.

Alongside this process of developing alternative income-generating activities, CARPE and its partners take part in the training of national NGO leaders. The World Resources Institute (WRI) has for more than a year been organizing a series of training courses in cartography and satellite imagery for better management of forestry information. This is to support forest control through the *Interactive Forestry Atlas* of Gabon Project.

Within the framework of the Small Grants Program, CARPE puts funds at the disposal of national NGOs, aimed at helping them develop and implement their projects. The goal is to encourage civil society to initiate activities that will guarantee the rational and sustainable use of natural resources. The funds are there to reinforce the efforts that national NGOs are already making in terms of the conservation and rational management of natural resources. Thus, projects that are funded are those identified and executed by the NGOs themselves.

Projects submitted to the Small Grants Program are mostly in the areas of environmental education and information. The *Centre d'Actions pour le Développement Durable et l'Environnement* (CADDE) received a small grant to establish an educational corridor more than 2 km long in the Gazetted Forest of Mondah. The biodiversity of this forest can be seen all along the corridor. This environmental education project has enabled CADDE to organize visits to the forest for several students from Libreville and its periphery.

The same Small Grants Program has financially supported environmental education projects initiated by Aventures Sans Frontières (ASF). This NGO has made presentations on the exploitation



Several young people visit this educational corridor at Combat II, Cap Estérias



of natural resources in Gabon and on the threats caused by wildlife exploitation, in several primary schools in Libreville.

For several years, the *Amis du Pangolin* (ADP) has received funding from the Small Grants Program for the publication of the environmental newsletter *Le cri du pangolin* (The cry of the Pangolin). These funds have made it possible to publish and distribute free of charge this sub-regional newsletter devoted exclusively to environmental information.

Within the Gamba and Mayumba regions, the Program has co-funded information and awareness campaigns run by IBONGA and Mayumba Nature. These campaigns, geared towards the

hunting of turtles, invite children and adults to change their attitudes towards this endangered species.

Other areas of activity are also covered, such as local community rights or research. On the issue of local community rights, the Program supports the Brainforest initiative whose goal is to make the population aware of their rights with regard to forest logging. The Brainforest project entails popularizing to the population around Minkébé National Park the legal provisions of the Forestry Code, namely that logging companies are obliged to invest in the communities situated close to their forest concessions.



The ASF environmental education programme in schools and on the Pongara beach

Still through the Small Grants Program, the *Forêt-Développement* NGO has carried out a study on “the conservation of humid ecosystems and sustainable development in the Etimboué District”. This project’s goal is to come up with a map of the Etimboué humid ecosystem, raising the awareness of the population on the socio-economic and ecological challenges of the conservation of humid ecosystems, and providing training on the design and management of micro-projects that favour biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development.

Until this day in Gabon, we have witnessed some kind of emulation of environmental NGOs that are making efforts to specialize in specific areas.

Lessons learnt

Although individual NGOs will always specialize to some extent in the projects that they develop and activities that they carry out, there is also a strong willingness on their part to come together at times and form a platform in order to work together to raise some of their concerns and better coordinate their actions.

At a national level, it has been observed that there has been a marked improvement in the interventions and positions of national NGOs on delicate questions related to the preservation of the environment and exploitation of natural resources.

The decision to combine efforts has made it possible for national environmental NGOs to be represented in several national structures. Thus, they have a member who takes part in the Social and Economic Council of Gabon and in the Management Committee of the National Agency for National Parks.

National environmental NGOs, organized into a platform, are increasingly being listened to. It was they who pointed out the inadequacies of the iron mining project in Belinga. This project was to be carried out without a preliminary environmental impact assessment. Its mining activities would seriously impact the three national parks situated close to the site: the Minkébé, Ivindo and Mwa-

gna National Parks. It also includes building a hydro-electric dam on the Kongou Falls. The internationalization of this project, through the actions of the NGO, has caused national authorities to revise the project in a number of ways that includes doing an environmental impact assessment.

The project to construct a second international airport in Libreville has also prompted some reaction from national NGOs. The State is proposing to construct this airport in the Mondah Gazetted Forest (FCM), situated within the northern periphery of Libreville.

The construction of this airport and the development of related activities will lead to the complete destruction of the FCM. This forest plays a key role in the training of National Forestry School students, as their practicals are carried out there. Also, the new airport will seriously impact the Akanda National Park, a site that is well known worldwide for the thousands of migratory birds that visit it annually.

Criticisms

Out of the various criticisms levelled at national NGOs by both national and international actors, we will comment on two that could be solved if the will was there.

The present level of capacity building of NGOs, though appreciable, still falls far short of what is needed. Their weak structure means most of them lead a very precarious existence which can have a negative impact on their activities. Very few national NGOs have permanent staff; several of them work mostly on a voluntary basis and only exist due to the dedication of their leaders. A sustainable funding mechanism for NGOs would help stabilize them and make their activities more visible.

The legal framework governing and organizing associations is not adapted to the context. The big changes that associations have known, with the coming of national organizations and the execution of large-scale activities, require a legal framework that is in line with the realities of the day.

In terms of the legal provisions of Law No. 35/62 of 10 December 1962, on the creation and organization of associations, many NGOs are working illegally.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, several national and international actors have criticized local NGOs on matters of form and content.

Administrative authorities assert that local NGOs are mere mouthpieces for their international partners, i.e., they only express the thoughts of the “foreigners” on whom they depend. Apart from this, these same authorities often accuse NGOs of being involved in politics, even though they are constituted as “apolitical associations”. This criticism was used to justify the suspension of Gabonese NGOs in January 2008. Besides these criticisms from the authorities, development partners think that national NGOs are “weak” and “not well structured”. They may not have the required capacities to face the challenges of achieving sustainable development.

The experience of the Small Grants Program shows clearly that national NGOs need more financial resources and technical guidance to promote the principles of sustainable and rational management of natural resources.

In order to build on the work already undertaken by CARPE, and moving beyond national initiatives, greater coordination of the efforts of members of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership is needed, to help strengthen the capacity of NGOs at the organizational and financial levels. To achieve this, the Commission for the Forests of Central Africa (COMIFAC) may, through its specialized bodies, create a project development fund for national NGOs.

A sustainable funding mechanism for national environmental NGOs will inevitably contribute to building up their organizational capacities, and quantitatively and qualitatively improve their participation in the sustainable management of natural resources.

In spite of these inadequacies, civil society has already undergone a remarkable evolution, with a marked improvement in the activities carried out.

The CARPE strategy of involving all of civil society in the management of natural resources and in the improvement of the living conditions of local communities underlies all efficient field activities that play a part in environmental conservation as well as the rational and sustainable use of resources. It is essential for national NGOs to be committed to acquiring adequate skills and to shouldering their responsibilities.

Case study 5 - The Use of Small Grants to Build Civil Society Capacity to Support the Conservation of Natural Resources : Lessons Learned from Democratic Republic of Congo

Serge Osodu Omba



Introduction

The Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) is undertaking activities for the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources in nine forest countries of the Congo Basin. To this end, one of the programme's key strategies is building the capacity of civil society actors with the aim of stimulating their active involvement in policy reform through advocacy and the development of income-generating activities at a local level, in a bid to reduce pressure on forest resources. The IUCN Small Grants Program (SGP), funded by CARPE, is intended to support this strategy.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is facing mammoth challenges in terms of natural resource management. In order to overcome these challenges, the involvement of all stakeholders in a participatory and inclusive approach is imperative. Civil society is essential to this process. It can contribute significantly to improving forest governance, facilitating the organization and struc-

turing of communities, developing income-generating activities to improve social welfare, and promoting gender considerations.

The contribution of the Coalition of Environmental NGO Networks (*Coalition des Réseaux des ONGs de l'Environnement* – CRON) to the government's legal review of its forest titles had clearly demonstrated the determining role that civil society could play with regard to advocacy in the interests of communities. Civil society has proven its ability to work to support the government, and also to promote the interests and build the capacities of local communities.

The SGP has been operating in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 2002 and has supported several small civil society (local NGOs, associations, etc ...) projects. Though not exhaustive, this document is a synthesis of lessons learned from the implementation of the SGP in the DRC.

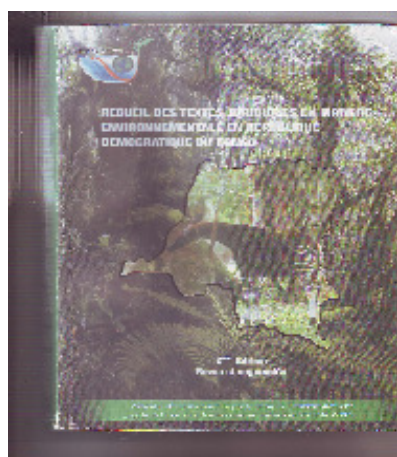
Objectives of the Small Grants Program

The SGP aims to promote and create a platform within civil society to support conservation and specifically to:

1. Build the capacities of civil society in institutional development and strategic planning, as a prerequisite to the sustainability of CARPE activities and objectives in the region;
2. Promote social welfare through the development of income-generating activities;
3. Effectively mainstream CARPE activities into the institutions of the host country;
4. Identify natural resource management policies that require national advocacy either to reform them or to draw them up;
5. Raise awareness at local, national and regional levels on forest governance issues;
6. Encourage gender equality.

SGP projects implemented and their impacts

The compendium of legal instruments on the environment in the DRC



The DRC is a post-conflict country. For some time all the legal instruments governing its natural resources sector were widely dispersed and almost inaccessible to most interested parties except for the legal profes-

sion. Thanks to help from the SGP, a national NGO called *Avocats Verts* (Green lawyers) was able to produce the first version of the compendium of legal instruments on the environment. This document was distributed to all the actors in the environmental sector at national, provincial and local levels. This exercise has been very successful in terms of training and raising public

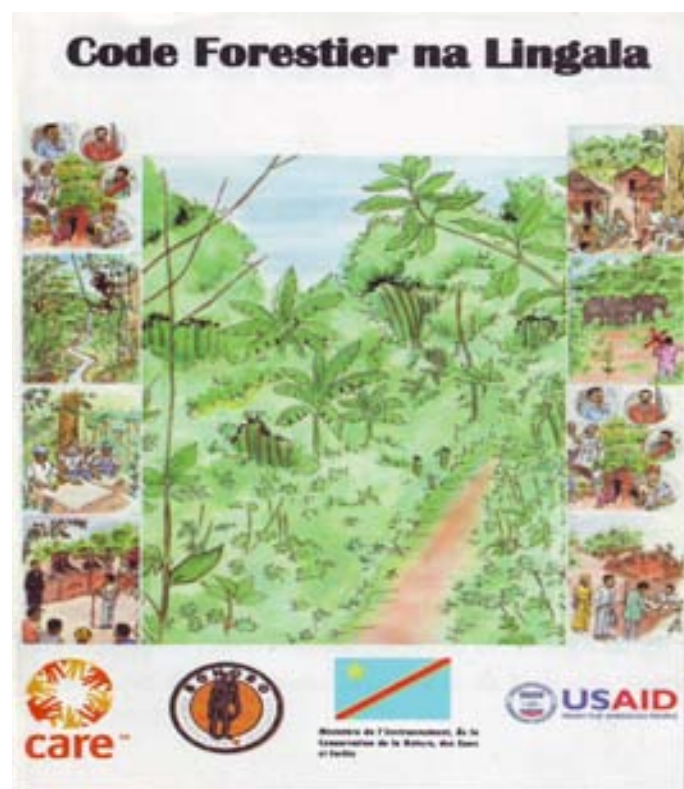
awareness on regulatory instruments governing environment management. The document was even used as a reference throughout the process of developing the DRC's Forestry Code, produced in 2002.

Following the enactment of the Forestry Code, several implementation decrees were promulgated and in the process the matter of updating the compendium was raised. Consequently, the same NGO, still supported by the SGP, produced a second edition of the compendium with the support of other partners.

Translation of the Forestry Code into Lingala and its dissemination

Good governance also entails transparency through the dissemination of laws and regulations governing forestry activities to grass-roots communities. This is a real challenge for those communities living in forested areas in the DRC, who represent about 70 percent of the country's population, and most of whom have received little education.

This challenge was taken up by an NGO, the national branch of a women's NGO called the Network of African Women for Sustainable



Development (Réseau des Femmes Africaines pour le Développement Durable – REFADD). This NGO translated the Forestry Code into a national language (Lingala), thanks to support from the SGP, and undertook an awareness-raising campaign in the Bandundu Province in the Lisala and Bongandanga territories in the Equator Province. This initiative has been really successful in raising the communities' awareness of their rights and duties with regards to forest management, and several international partners, notably SNV (the Netherlands Development Organisation) and Care International, have produced revised and improved versions of the document in Lingala, Swahili and Kikongo in order to extend the dissemination of the Forestry Code all over the country.

Promotion of wildlife laws

Poaching is still a major concern affecting all biodiversity conservation efforts in the DRC. One of the factors that aggravate poaching is ignorance of the law and, even more so, ignorance of which species are totally or partially protected because they are on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Again with the help of a small grant, REFADD, which had already gained the trust of the communities in the Ituri-Epulu-Aru Landscape, developed posters showing the protected species of the DRC and posted them around protected areas. This resulted in local communities reporting to the police eight cases of poachers who had in their possession whole specimens or parts of integrally protected species (Okapi).

The success achieved by REFADD through their awareness-raising campaign and production of visual aids (posters) has inspired other partners, notably the NGO SOS Nature that has paid for the translation into Swahili of the law governing hunting and its annexes, and disseminated 1,000 copies around the hunter communities in the forests of Mambasa around the Okapi Faunal Reserve. This has raised the level of awareness and knowledge amongst hunters as well as communities, the majority of whom up to now had only been interested in the hunting calendar and the types of species to be hunted.

The same NGO (SOS Nature) enabled the creation of a multi-stakeholder platform for the management of wildlife resources, involving several territories and provincial government authorities. This platform monitors and guides female bushmeat sellers, and reports cases of poaching protected species. This platform has also become the body in charge of wildlife issues in the land-use planning process undertaken by the CARPE-CBFP-WCS Ituri Project.

In addition to these activities promoting laws and regulations, the SGP has also contributed to reducing deforestation, promoting rational management of forest resources and alleviating poverty.

Poverty alleviation through the promotion of development actions

Local NGOs work directly with grass-roots communities and consequently they know their socio-economic realities and their development imperatives in relation to the conservation and sustainable management of resources. Two NGOs (including an association of six NGO networks – Protection de l'écosystème et des espèces rares du sud-est de l'Equateur (PERSE); Initiative locale de développement intégré (ILDI) ; Faune, flore et santé à Yahuma (FFSY) ; Centre de développement intégré de Lomako (CEDILO); Centre de Développement Agro-Pastoral de Djolu (CEDAP) and Action pour le développement et la Conservation de la Nature (ADCN) – operating in six territories of the flagship Maringa/Lopori-Wamba Landscape (Djolu, Bongandanga, Befale, Lomako, Yahuma, Basankusu)) have through the SGP supported the revival of sustainable agriculture (agroforestry), with more than 300 ha planted with varied foodstuffs, affecting more than 300 women. A second project has supported grazing and fishing activities in the Monkoto Territory in the Salonga-Lukenie-Sankuru Landscape. These two projects have enabled the communities to improve their livelihoods and to engage in conservation activities.



Still more projects supported by the SGP...

(a) A local NGO called Comité des exploitants et négociants de Mambasa (CENEM) has tackled small-scale illegal logging in the Ituri Landscape, a growing problem on this site, by identifying the small-scale exploiters and raising their awareness of the legal instruments governing forest exploitation. In addition, CENEM organized the illegal loggers by assisting them in the process of formalizing their activities with the local administration by obtaining legal permits. The loggers have since formed themselves into an association. Thanks to these efforts made by civil society, the administration can now control this group of small-scale exploiters and raise revenues through imposing taxes.

(b) The NGO called Programme d'action pour le développement intégré des paysans (PADIP) is working towards finding alternatives to deforestation for the sake of satisfying energy needs by producing and popularizing improved stoves destined for women of the Ituri-Epulu-Aru and Virunga Landscapes. More than 500 households

have received improved stoves of which about 1 000 were distributed to women.

(c) The Coalition of Environmental NGO Networks (CRON). Within the framework of the quest for alternative uses of forests in the DRC, CRON has collected scientific data in Bongo in the Inongo Territory, a zone that was being logged before the government's legal review of forest concessions declared it no longer suitable for this purpose. This wildlife and non-timber forest products inventory in the Lake Tamba Landscape has succeeded in demonstrating the unique value of the site in terms of biodiversity. The results of this project will serve as a useful tool when advocating for the gazettelement of the zone as a nature reserve.

Lessons learned

The outputs obtained from the projects supported by the SGP are tangible and fall in line with CARPE's strategic objectives in the region :

(a) The compendium of legal instruments on the environment in the DRC, first published in 2000,

was the very first document that comprehensively put together all environmental legal instruments (decrees and others) in force in the country. This compendium served as a legal basis in the process of developing the first Forestry Code of the DRC, which replaced the Royal Decree of 1949.

(b) Translating the Forestry Code from French into Lingala and disseminating it has made it possible to pass on, to the communities living in and around the forest massif, the legal instruments on the management of forest resources. Lingala is a very popular vernacular language that is understood by village communities that are more often than not have received little education.

(c) The promotion of the wildlife law using visual aids such as posters in Lingala placed around protected areas has served as a catalyst for strengthening law enforcement and encouraging local communities to report cases of poaching of protected species. As of today, eight cases have been recorded in Ituri around the Okapi Faunal Reserve. This proves that NGOs have the capacity to mobilize local communities to combat poaching, transforming them into game wardens.

(d) The SGP has helped civil society to collaborate effectively with government institutions, thus breaking the myth that has always classified civil society as a source of nuisance to the government. This is seen from the action of the NGO SOS Nature that has not only created a multi-stakeholder platform involving several territories and provincial government authorities for the management of wildlife resources in the Ituri, but also trained it to monitor and evaluate as well as provide guidance to female bushmeat sellers with the aim of reducing the poaching of protected species.

(e) The promotion and development of income-generating activities to improve social welfare goes hand in hand with the strategy to conserve biodiversity. While several international partners either lack the expertise or the willingness to invest therein, the SGP has been an efficient mechanism for bridging this gap by mobilizing village communities through local NGOs and associations. Through the SGP, an association of six networks of NGOs (CEDAP, PERSE, ILDI, FFSY,

CEDILO and ADCN) has revived sustainable agriculture (agroforestry), with more than 300 ha being planted with varied foodstuffs, impacting more than 300 women in six territories (Djolu, Bongandanga, Befale, Lomako, Yahuma and Basankusu) in the Maringa/Lopori-Wamba Landscape

The work of promoting and building the capacities of civil society through the SGP is already bearing fruit with several multiplier effects. For example, the significant role that CRON played in the entire process of converting forest titles into forest concessions in the DRC with the support of the World Bank; and the CEDAP platform, that is active in the Maringa/Lopori-Wamba Landscape in the Djolu Territory, being granted the status of advisory body to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) for local development-related issues.

Conclusion

The Small Grants Program (with its grants ranging from US\$15,000–40,000) has shown itself to be extremely effective in building the capacities of civil society organizations and mobilizing them to raise awareness and undertake advocacy through **(a)** the dissemination of legal instruments governing the management of forest resources; **(b)** the promotion and/or development of income-generating activities for the wellbeing of local communities; and **(c)** promoting gender considerations and encouraging reporting of damages caused to biodiversity.

These are areas in which several international and even governmental partners generally lack expertise and hence they have often failed to include these concerns in their strategies for the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources.

Therefore, the SGP should not only be strengthened financially to satisfy increasing demand in the sub-region, but its approach should be mainstreamed into the programmes of government and international donor organizations, given that CARPE itself was only conceived to last for 20 years.