

Cameroon

Securing Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Conservation: Reviewing and promoting progress in Cameroon



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Securing Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Conservation: Reviewing and promoting progress in Cameroon

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This review builds upon the previous report,
**'Indigenous Forest Peoples and Protected Areas in Cameroon: A review
of Cameroon's implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on
Protected Areas'**
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Three Cameroon case studies appear in FPP's book, *Indigenous peoples and
protected areas in Africa. From principles to practice*, published in 2003
to coincide with the 5th World Parks Congress:

**'One forest and two dreams: the constraints imposed on the Baka in
Miatta by the Dja Wildlife Reserve'** by Samuel Nguiffo

**'Protected areas and indigenous peoples: the paradox of conservation
and survival of the Baka in Moloundou region (south-east Cameroon)'** by
Benoit Ndamou, and

**'The extent of Bagyeli Pygmy involvement in the development and
Management Plan of the Campo Ma-an UTO'**
by Joseph Claude Owono.

All are available on FPP's website: www.forestpeoples.org



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Cover photograph: A Baka project worker explains the work carried out by
local communities to document where their traditional
forest areas have been overlapped by the new Boumba
Bek National Park in the Eastern Province of Cameroon

Photographs: John Nelson

Executive Summary

This is a report of a case study which reviews progress towards application in Cameroon of conservation standards protecting community rights. These standards are embodied in the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Durban Accord and Action plan of the 2003 World Parks Congress, and the resolutions of the 2004 IUCN World Conservation Congress. The review focuses assessment of progress in relation to indigenous peoples living in Cameroon's forests, especially those Baka, Bakola and Bagyeli living in and around Lobeke, Boumba Bek, Nki and Campo Ma'an National Parks, as well as the Dja Wildlife Reserve that has been declared a World Heritage Site.

The case study builds upon work since 2000 by Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) and local partners to document in Central Africa the degree to which the 'new conservation paradigm' recognising community rights is being applied on the ground, and to promote this in conservation projects affecting local and indigenous communities. The research for this Cameroon case study is based upon: outcomes of various processes addressing community rights issues in and around the protected areas mentioned above; regional meetings between donors, practitioners, NGOs and community representatives to explore how to address gaps between international promises and on-the-ground progress; and new interviews with staff of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Cameroonian government ministries, protected area directors and parks staff, and NGOs working with forest communities all over Cameroon; and meetings held with government officials and Baka communities in early 2009 to discuss the outcomes of the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona of October 2008 as part of a long-term process to secure protection for community rights within park management plans in Cameroon.

The report concludes that until 2000, little progress had been made in Cameroon to secure forest communities' rights. With the exception of a few measures to protect specific community livelihood activities inside parks, such as in Lobeke National Park, conservation organisations and the government had done almost nothing in Cameroon to implement their international commitments to protect community rights in their conservation projects. Most of the new standards to which they had agreed remained unknown at the local level. Yet it is conservation and especially government staff at the local level who most need to be informed about these new standards, and be given support to implement them. In addition to being impeded by a persistent lack of information and support, local government officials in particular are also constrained by their duty to implement outdated laws which contradict the government's international commitments.

The report identifies the tendency by government, conservation agencies and donors to organise workshops and conferences without any follow-up, and to arrange trainings without any field action. Many initiatives by conservation organisations claiming to target communities have little impact on the ground, often remaining unknown to communities, who are supposed to be their main beneficiaries. The report recognises recent efforts made by the government, along with conservation organisations, to document, recognise and protect community rights and livelihoods around Campo Ma'an, Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks. This final report includes revisions to reflect findings from the wide public consultations over the draft of the case study, which were carried out by FPP in Cameroon during early 2009.

Acronyms

AAFEBEN	<i>Appui a l'Auto Promotion de la Femme de la Boumba et Ngoko</i>
APA	Access and Benefit Sharing
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CED	Centre for Environment and Development
CEFAID	<i>Centre pour l'Education, la Formation et l'Appui aux Initiatives de Développement</i> (Centre for education, training and development support)
COMIFAC	Central African Forests Commission
COP	Conference of the Parties (to the CBD)
DGIS	Netherlands Directorate-General of Development Cooperation
ECOFAC	Forest Ecosystems in Central Africa (funded by the European Commission)
FPP	Forest Peoples Programme
GEF	Global Environmental Facility (of the World Bank)
GTZ	German Organization for Technical Cooperation
ICRAF	World Agroforestry Centre
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
MINFOF	Ministry of Forests and Wildlife
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PERAD	(NGO based in Lomie)
RAPAC	<i>Réseau des aires protégées d'Afrique Centrale</i> (Central African protected areas network)
TNS	Tri-National de la Sangha (cross-border protected area: Cameroon, Central African Republic and Republic of Congo)
UNEP	United Nations Development Programme
UTO	Operational Technical Unit
WCC	World Conservation Congress
WPC	World Parks Congress

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Introduction

This report reviews progress towards application in Cameroon of conservation standards protecting community rights. These standards are embodied in the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Durban Accord and Action plan of the 2003 World Parks Congress, and the resolutions of the 2004 IUCN World Conservation Congress.

The review focuses on assessing progress in relation to indigenous peoples living in Cameroon's forests, especially those Baka, Bakola and Bagyeli living in and around Lobeke, Boumba Bek, Nki and Campo Ma'an National Parks, and the Dja Wildlife Reserve, a World Heritage Site.

For many years these indigenous communities have lived in these highly biodiverse zones, which only recently have been transformed into protected areas. The fact that in recent times these places have gained recognition as areas of high natural biodiversity is linked to the fact that the indigenous peoples living there were always natural allies of conservation. These groups should, therefore, be involved in their management.

However, a key characteristic shared by these indigenous groups from around protected areas is that they are in almost constant conflict with conservation groups, including international conservation organisations, along with Cameroonian government forest agencies and especially the forest and wildlife guards they support.

The customs, social systems and cultures of Baka, Bakola and Bagyeli are closely linked to the laws governing the natural ecosystems that they use – for example certain animals are venerated and protected locally as totems, and are therefore protected by communities.¹ In recent times these communities – and their environments – have become vulnerable to outside forces intent on exploiting these ecosystems in non-sustainable ways.

It is now 21 years since the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) launched its initiative to protect the world's resources. The Convention on Biological Diversity was created and adopted by many governments over 17 years ago. And it has been five years since the Durban World Parks Congress, where numerous other resolutions protecting biodiversity as well as community rights were also agreed. The result has been the development of a 'new conservation paradigm' that should link protection of biodiversity more closely with the promotion of communities' rights. It is now the right time to pause for reflection, to evaluate progress.

This case study builds upon work since 2000 by FPP and local and indigenous communities and their supporters to document in Central Africa the degree to which the 'new conservation paradigm' recognising community rights is being applied on the ground. The research for this Cameroon case study is based upon outcomes of various processes addressing community rights issues in and around the protected areas mentioned above: regional meetings between donors, practitioners, NGOs and community representatives to

¹ Nelson, John and Messe Venant (September 2008) 'Indigenous peoples' participation in mapping of traditional forest resources for sustainable livelihoods and great apes conservation. Report to the Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNEP)'. Project report. Moreton-in-Marsh: Forest Peoples Programme. www.forestpeoples.org .

explore how to address gaps between international promises and on-the-ground progress; interviews with staff of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Cameroonian government ministries, protected area directors and parks staff, and NGOs working with forest communities all over Cameroon; and meetings organised by FPP with government officials and hundreds of Baka from around Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks during early 2009 in order to review the outcomes of the World Conservation Congress (WCC) in Barcelona of October 2008.

COP 7 of the CBD: Application of Articles 8(j) and 10(c)

In Cameroon, policies and initiatives related to natural resources have generally been developed without the sustainable participation of those who rely upon them the most, i.e. local and indigenous forest communities. Like other countries in the sub-region, Cameroon has for a long time employed a highly centralised management strategy that has generally conferred control over natural resources to forest and wildlife ministries, or to outside experts. Government ministries for forests and wildlife have an official monopoly over the control and management of natural resources. Their local branches (the provincial and departmental delegations) focus principally on the direct management of wildlife. Protected areas are also managed by Cameroon's central government agencies, but almost always with the support of international organisations, including among others the WWF, the IUCN, ECOFAC and GTZ.

The centralised nature of government management of natural resources in Cameroon has not substantially changed over the past decade. This means that in general, and with a few notable exceptions, indigenous community rights have not been protected in government forest management plans, and indigenous peoples are not really involved in the management of national parks and reserves, logging concessions or safari areas. This suggests that general application of CBD Articles 8(j) and 10(c), along with decisions of the 7th Conference of Parties (COP 7), has not moved forward substantially in Cameroon.

Various groups in Cameroon benefit in one way or another from forest peoples' traditional knowledge. They include:

- logging companies, who use indigenous peoples to help them identify tree species and organise their work in the forest;
- safari companies, who use indigenous peoples as hunting guides due to their knowledge of the forest, their ability to mimic and even call animals, and for their highly developed senses;
- conservation organisations, including WWF, GTZ and WCS, who use forest peoples to help them with their biological and botanical studies.

There is little debate over the extremely high competence of indigenous peoples in the forest, or of their extensive forest knowledge and expertise. However, in reality, the creation and management of protected areas in Cameroon has done nothing to protect the rights of indigenous peoples to their traditional knowledge. The few initiatives that are starting to move in this direction are still in their infancy. The notion of land rights remains purely a western idea.

The ancestral interdependence of indigenous communities and their biological resources, and the need to guarantee that these communities will be able to benefit fairly from them in the same way as other communities, is linked to their use of traditional practices and knowledge to conserve natural resources.

They are the best conservationists, that is why we find so many resources in the places where they have lived for thousands of years,

confirmed the provincial head of protected areas in Cameroon's Eastern province. Unfortunately, the government of Cameroon has not yet fully committed itself officially, or on a large scale, to take account of indigenous communities' traditional knowledge, or to enable their active participation in the management of protected areas. The government has done even less to share the benefits of protected areas with the communities.

Article 10(c) stipulates that each contracting state, as far as it is able, should:

protect and encourage the sustainable use of customary resource compatible with their conservation and sustainable use requirements.

However, under Cameroonian law, entry to protected areas is forbidden to everyone – Baka and Bantu alike. This means that communities are already prevented from carrying out traditional activities there, and this is leading to community decline, representing a serious threat to the survival of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge. This in turn is threatening the survival of the way of life of both Baka and Bantu. Their strong attachment to the forest is illustrated by this exclamation of an old Baka from Mbandjani (a village which lies between Lobeke and Boumba Bek National Parks), who said:

If I do not go into the forest, I do not eat.

In the case of Cameroon, the law preventing the use of these forests has taken precedence over any measures to protect communities' customary use of biological resources. The traditional, cultural practices that are known to be compatible with the conservation of biological resources have been downgraded or even ignored. The protection of 'threatened species' is the only priority addressed by the creation of protected areas, even though indigenous peoples such as Baka, Bakola and Bagyeli who live in the areas where national parks are being created, were already protecting such species for cultural and religious reasons.

Through projects supported by UK-based FPP and Cameroon-based Centre for Environment and Development (CED), various reviews of indigenous peoples' customary use have been undertaken since 2001. These projects include:

1. Securing the rights of Bagyeli in and around Campo Ma'an National Park (2001–03).
2. Securing Livelihoods and Rights in the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline Zone (2001–06)
3. Protecting and encouraging customary use of biological resources by the Baka in the Dja Biosphere Reserve. Contribution to the implementation of Article 10(c) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2004–06)
4. Securing the rights of indigenous Baka communities around Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks', 2007–09.

WWF also carried out studies of communities' traditional use around national parks, including, most notably, collaboration since 2007 with FPP and CED on studies around Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks. These studies are contributing to Cameroon's application of CBD provisions around these two parks, where the government has expressed commitment to protect indigenous peoples' rights and livelihoods in the park management plans.

Conservation organisations and indigenous peoples

Relations between conservation organisations and indigenous peoples in Cameroon have evolved over the past decade. However, our consultations with communities in 2009 suggest that many indigenous people feel they are 'becoming strangers in their own homes'. Even now, Baka and Bagyeli often run to hide when they see a white Land Rover approaching, because they usually assume that it contains ecoguards who will disrupt their day with a search or other harassment.

In Cameroon many Baka communities were displaced from their original dwelling places and their traditional activities by public powers – primarily those charged with the management of protected areas. These indigenous communities now live on the edges of protected areas, and under the law, customary hunting and gathering is forbidden inside the parks. Baka also face serious discrimination from neighbouring Bantu communities, the other main group who live near the parks and along the roads. Baka suffer gross political marginalisation in their local areas, even where they are in the majority, such as in rural areas of the Eastern Province.

Since 2001 FPP and CED have been working with local organisations to support communities from around Campo Ma'an National Park, Boumba Bek National Park, Nki National Park and the Dja Wildlife Reserve to document their traditional resource use, gain a voice in forest planning and secure their rights. This has included lobbying conservation NGOs and donors to revise their approach to working with indigenous communities.

In all of these cases, community mapping processes resulted from studies initiated by FPP in 2001, and carried out with local partners in 10 African countries including Cameroon. The purpose of these studies was to examine the application of international standards protecting indigenous peoples' rights in and around protected areas, and they found a range of violations of indigenous peoples' rights. In Cameroon, case studies were completed by local partners working with indigenous communities from around Campo Ma'an National Park, the Dja Reserve and Lobeke, Boumba Bek and Nki National parks. (see http://www.forestpeoples.org/documents/conservation/bases/p_to_p_project_base.shtml)

In south-east Cameroon, project activities implemented with communities between 2006 and 2008 focused on providing information and training, establishing community dialogue with authorities, and participatory mapping. This was done by building up the capacity of communities, including providing them with information about their land rights, and providing training to enable them to collect data for their own land-use maps and use them in their discussions with conservation agencies. Complementary work has also been carried out by WWF, with similar findings about the huge extent of customary land use throughout

the UTO (Operational Technical Unit). Many community maps are now becoming available, and they will be useful in discussions with conservation agencies and NGOs while the final management plan is drafted and discussed.

The Cameroon government's willingness to adapt has been crucial to the success of this work, and there has been significant progress over recent years. The government has made positive efforts with their partners to address issues related to biodiversity conservation and forest management through certification processes, which aim to take into account socio-economic aspects relevant to local forest populations. In 2003 the government protected indigenous Bagyeli access and use rights in the management plan for Campo Ma'an National Park – after communities had documented their traditional areas on forest maps in 2001.

During a meeting at the end of 2006 FPP, CED, Baka community representatives, WWF Yokadouma and local conservation staff agreed to collaborate to document Baka traditional use in and around Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks. The objective of this collaboration was to assess and secure the rights of these communities in those national parks, in commercial hunting zones (the so-called safari concessions), and in logging concessions, all through official protection in government-approved forest management plans.

With the support of FPP, in 2007 local organisations, including CED, Okani, AAFEBEN, CEFAID, and PERAD² initiated a project entitled 'Securing the rights of indigenous Baka communities around Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks'. The project aims to support implementation of Article 10(c) of the CBD in Cameroon by helping local and indigenous communities secure their customary rights in the management plans for Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks. This participatory project is helping indigenous Baka build up their capacity to defend their rights and to document their ancestral lands by using participatory mapping of their traditional areas. The resulting forest-use maps are to become the basis for negotiations with government authorities charged with managing the parks.

In order to facilitate this process, meetings and activities were carried out between 2006 and 2008 to help communities prepare their maps. The community mapping work intensified during 2008, despite some hesitation by some conservation staff, a new *conservateur* for Boumba Bek National Park who is often unavailable for interview. The community maps are now being validated by their communities.

The outcomes of the Barcelona WCC experience have been widely disseminated and discussed with communities in south-east Cameroon. Feedback from communities during 2008 and the 2009 consultations indicate that there is now widespread expectation that the customary rights of Baka from in and around Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks will be protected in the new government-approved management plan for these parks. The potential beneficial impacts of this on Cameroon's application of CBD provisions are already being discussed in national forums, sub-regional forums (COMIFAC, TNS) and international forums (COP–CBD). These are the high ambitions that Baka people are

² CED is based in Yaounde. CED's programme coordinator, Georges Thierry, is directly responsible for the CED/GTZ project. Messe Venant is the general coordinator of the Baka NGO, Okani, which is based in Bertoua. Miranda Akongongol is the coordinator of Yokadouma-based AAFEBEN. Victor Amougou is the coordinator of CEFAID, also based in Yokadouma. PERAD is based in Lomie, and coordinated by Angele Ankoh.

promoting through this project's support of indigenous peoples – a group who previously had almost no voice.



Yokadouma NGOs, including Baka staff, being trained by CED in the use of new mapping technologies. They are now using these practical tools in their work with communities in the field.

Financial support to conservation, and benefit sharing

The management of protected areas in Cameroon is supported financially by international donors. As with other sectors, it is these donors who set the agenda and influence management policies. Despite the language of the Durban Accord, conservation organisations have not significantly changed their policies in relation to indigenous peoples in Cameroon. Instead, the status quo has been maintained by talking about a 'process.' Conservation organisations have remained focused on the preservation of wildlife through a ferocious attack against poaching: following Durban, the WWF-trained ecoguards (who fall under the control of the Government of Cameroon) have had a serious impact on local people, leading to repressive rule and allegations of serious human rights violations.

Most other funding for conservation, for example by the United Nations Development Fund, the World Bank and its Global Environment Facility (GEF), have promoted international cooperation, and have financed the fight against loss of biodiversity, climate change, loss of the ozone layer and water degradation. Funding for social issues has not been forthcoming, and nothing has been done to implement the Durban Accord.

In August 2008 a workshop was held in Cameroon related to the 9th Conference of Parties (COP 9), which took place in May 2008. The goal of the August workshop was to enable indigenous peoples from across Central Africa to contribute effectively to the application of the CBD in Central Africa with relation to 'Access and Benefit Sharing' (APA), and especially to genetic resources. It also aimed to inform indigenous peoples about this process.

In addition, the meeting provided information on the work programme of the CBD as it relates to Article 8(j). This was the first workshop in Cameroon that aimed to identify and define the role of indigenous peoples in the process of enabling APA. It also provided an opportunity to take into account decisions made at COP 9. Organised by the CBD Secretariat, the workshop was made possible thanks to financial support from Canada, France, COMIFAC, GTZ and WWF. Participants included indigenous peoples from Gabon, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, and Cameroon.

Over the course of those discussions the forest authorities clearly recognised that the issue of benefit sharing still needed to be addressed, that a path towards securing this needed to be developed, and that our eyes needed to be focused on this in the future. Another important aspect of this debate relating to Cameroon's biological diversity was how to use the traditional knowledge of Baka and Bagyeli in the management of protected areas. Unfortunately these issues remained at the level of speculation, and little attention was paid to the views of indigenous peoples during this discussion.

The Baka of the Boumba-Ngoko Department in the Eastern Province of Cameroon are increasingly informed about these issues, and have already questioned WWF Yokadouma about the lack of benefits they receive from the so-called 'Jengi Project',³ the principal WWF conservation project in south-east Cameroon that receives substantial funding from international donors. Baka believe that some of these resources should be shared with them, i.e. as part of their role in the management of the three national parks (Lobeke, Boumba Bek and Nki) that overlap their traditional lands.

Transfrontier protected areas

The Sangha Trinational protected area (TNS) was formally established at Durban to group together protected areas in Cameroon (Lobeke), Central African Republic (Dzanga-Sangha) and the Republic of Congo (Nouabale-Ndoki). This vast forest space is home to thousands of indigenous forest peoples whose lives could become severed from their forest due to conservation pressures, and who will be forced to adapt their lifestyles to practising agriculture in order to survive. The TNS Foundation has raised considerable financial support, all of which will be targeted to conservation thereby excluding the communities entirely. Local indigenous communities are not even aware of the foundation since its dealings are only with civil servants. The decision of whether or not to help a particular community or local community organisation is left up to conservation agencies.

³ Jengi is one of the most respected Baka spirits. Young Baka men are initiated by Jengi. Someone who is not initiated should not use its name lightly.

The IUCN and GEF

The IUCN developed a programme called 'Landscapes and Livelihoods' after recognising the need for more concentrated efforts to coordinate its work in the field with national poverty-reduction policies. This programme is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs via its development agency, DGIS. The programme aims to document the role played by natural resources in enabling poor rural people to secure their livelihoods. The programme will be implemented within the framework of the TNS, and in Cameroon the project is targeting the local population around Lobeke National Park. The goal of the project is to combat poverty by helping local rural people increase their economic opportunities by supporting them to market non-timber forest products. The four-year Landscapes and Livelihoods project (2007–2010) works in collaboration with the World Bank, the International Tropical Timber Organisation, the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and the Rights and Resources Initiative. Already in its third year, the question remains: to what extent have local and indigenous communities been involved in this project? None of the local population is aware of this programme. Why?

The GEF is targeting increased involvement by Bagyeli communities around Campo Ma'an National Park in the management and conservation of biodiversity, based upon their forest knowledge. It aims to support Bagyeli to protect their customary use in line with sustainability and conservation objectives. More precisely, to help indigenous communities protect their knowledge, innovations and practices while also supporting the development of alternative viable, sustainable and appropriate economic activities. The principal activities are providing support to Bagyeli of South Cameroon for beekeeping, ecotourism, and documentation of their traditional forest knowledge through:

1. Campo-Lolodorf Sustainable Livelihoods Pygmy Engagement Project, and;
2. Supporting Capacity Building of Local Civil Society in Project Formulation.

Ongoing work by either the IUCN or the GEF focuses only on capacity building via more and more workshops. Unfortunately the beneficiaries of these trainings are not provided with the means to reach the communities. This means training without an outcome.

The government and protected areas

For government agencies responsible for protected areas in Cameroon, the 1994 Law regulating forests and wildlife provides the overarching framework that they are bound to apply on the ground. This law forbids access and use of resources inside national parks. The law was passed by the members of Cameroon's National Assembly, who were elected by the people of Cameroon, and must therefore be followed by all Cameroonians without exception. But the law also has to cope with local customs. Cameroon's protected areas were created to respond to a specific need, and to enable the government to conform to international agreements. For those charged with managing Cameroon's forests at the local level, substantive negotiations over enabling traditional activities inside protected areas often seem impossible, since government officials are trying to apply the law as is their duty.

For example, a meeting in July 2008 with government representatives in Yokadouma, to discuss the outcomes of community data collection in and around Boumba Bek National Park (where there was high participation of indigenous Baka), came to an abrupt end. This was due to significant difficulties in reaching agreement with civil servants over community recommendations about how to accommodate the priorities and concerns of local Baka in the management plan for this recently established national park. The evidence presented in that meeting by WWF and local communities showed definitively that Boumba Bek National Park overlaps many Baka traditional lands. There is, hence, great hope that Baka's traditional usage rights will be recognised in the plan in line with international texts agreed by the national government. However, local consensus about how to resolve the problem – i.e. by protecting customary rights – is still blocked by observance of the 1994 law forbidding all access and use.

Cameroonian Law 94/01 of 20 January 1994, relating to the regulation of forests and wildlife in Cameroon, governs the application of national forest policies. Respecting the spirit of this law should mean respecting the rights of local and indigenous peoples – they have the greatest stake in the continuing conservation of the forests and wildlife, since their livelihoods and culture rely upon them.

The table overleaf summarises outcomes of discussions between government representatives at a CBD workshop held in Libreville in January 2008.

Table: A synthesis of obstacles, next steps, and support required, identified by African government representatives at the Libreville CBD workshop in January 2008

Theme	Obstacle	Next Steps	Support Required
Analysis of issues	Lack of field data Insufficient scientific knowledge Insufficient or lack of marine and transfrontier protected areas Lack of funding Insufficient coordination	Institutionalisation National strategies Inventories Developing management plans Training Development of a national data base	Development of political support Provision of expertise Capacity building Financial and technical support
Evaluation of management efficiency	Weak or non-existent institutions Lack of coordination Human resource shortage Lack of strategic vision Lack of monitoring and evaluation Lack of management	Finalising management plans Exchanging experiences Developing national strategies	Lobbying international organisations Capacity building Targeted information provision Technical support
Funding sustainability	Lack or absence of political support Weak legislation Lack of knowledge about funding mechanisms Lack of participation by private sectors Lack of funding	Identifying donors Accelerating the mobilisation of funding Developing terms of reference Identifying experts Improving local knowledge and expertise	Capacity building Diversification of revenue source

It is clear from this synthesis that African governments and conservation organisations have many of their own problems to address. This is a major reason why indigenous peoples' priorities have been continuously neglected in the management of protected areas. What is even more worrying is that the priorities of local peoples – whether they be indigenous or not – are still not on the agenda of urgent issues that African governments

aim to address. At the last CBD meeting in Gabon community issues were addressed as follows:

to carry out actions necessary to build up the capacities of local and indigenous communities to become effectively involved in the identification, planning, and establishment of protected areas.

These next steps have not been scheduled, but will likely mean only that indigenous peoples will be invited to attend meetings and conferences, i.e. they will be physically present.

Lack of dissemination of information

The Durban Accord is not being applied in Cameroon. In fact, civil servants are unaware of it, as are local and indigenous peoples living around protected areas. In most cases, international instruments concerning biodiversity linked to the CBD and the CBD's Programme of Work on Protected Areas are not known of by the local population, or even by civil servants in MINFOF (the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife) who are responsible for applying these decisions in the field. Field experience shows that in reality, civil servants in charge of forests often allow indigenous peoples to access forests even when this contradicts the letter of the law, because they realise the need for communities to access their forests to survive. These local officials experience daily the problems with trying to apply an inappropriately designed law. This makes their situation and relations with communities very complicated.

A large number of civil servants and other people working around protected areas, along with local and indigenous communities, do not have adequate access to new knowledge, information and guidelines emitting from international policy processes. For example, local forest managers were not aware of the COP 9 meeting nor the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in October 2008. They have few opportunities to learn from these international and national processes in order to enable them to apply the new standards on the ground. There is usually a long delay before managers are informed about new important themes which they need to be aware of in order to ensure the long-term viability of the conservation sites for which they are directly responsible.

In general, government staff sent to participate in international meetings and learn about new techniques and ideas are from the central administration. Weak and slow bureaucracies impede the flow of information from the centre to other parts of the system, i.e. to local offices who have most contact with local people. There is, therefore, a need to conceive new mechanisms to enable effective exchange of experience and knowledge with field managers, as part of a capacity-building drive, and to enable rapid diffusion of lessons and guidelines to modernise conservation management on the ground.

Akwé: Kon Guidelines

The Akwé: Kon Guidelines, developed by the CBD in conjunction with indigenous and local communities, aim to provide a general guide for practitioners and governments on how to integrate local and indigenous communities' cultural, ecological, social, and biodiversity priorities into working procedures and future impact studies. They provide a framework for

collaboration to enable governments and protected area managers, decision makers and administrators of development projects to prevent, reduce and mitigate the negative impacts of policies and proposed projects. The adoption of these guidelines was one of the accomplishments of COP 7 in 2004. Unfortunately, and in spite of their clear importance, these guidelines remain unknown in Cameroon. The issue of information flow is a real problem preventing application of Cameroon's international commitments, and this needs to be addressed before 2010.

Other obstacles to the implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas

One of the principal obstacles to the application of the CBD in and around protected areas in Cameroon is the fact that the forest administration's main focus is on issues related to timber production, which favours logging over wildlife protection. The reality in the field is that the forest administration does not recognise indigenous peoples' rights, and does not want to help indigenous peoples to actually participate in the development and implementation of forest plans. This is a problem wherever indigenous forest peoples live in Cameroon. Around protected areas, the majority of civil servants responsible for management have never heard of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas or the Durban Action Plan. This is a serious handicap preventing the application of these decisions in the management of protected areas.

The process of developing the management plans for Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks is linked to long-term discussions between local and indigenous communities, conservation and human rights NGOs, and local government agencies charged with the management of forests in the southeastern province. These discussions have been about how to reconcile customary rights inside the national parks with national laws that forbid all access and use. It is now widely acknowledged by all parties that much of the forest is used by local people to secure their subsistence, so something must be done to accommodate their needs, and to protect their rights. However, statutory requirements still impell government agencies to produce management plans in line with national laws, which in turn contradict the spirit of the CBD.

Meanwhile, the continued application of forest prohibitions in a harsh manner by private (e.g. safari) and public (government) ecoguards, is exacerbating conflicts between communities and forest authorities. The resulting tension has caused inevitable disputes between the different groups involved, mostly without clear resolution. This has blocked discussions and negotiations with communities, and information sharing has been further weakened. The reason is partly a lack of capacity and the high turnover of conservation and NGO staff, but it is primarily a systematic erosion of trust. Amongst many communities there is the strong perception that some stakeholders are not adequately transparent about their engagement. For example, communities have still not been provided with the draft management plan, even though it has been under preparation for over a year. The situation is changing, as shown by the recent cooperation and openness of local government authorities during FPP's community consultations around the parks in 2009. However, in the absence of the draft plan for communities to discuss, they will not know where they stand.

Conclusion

The Durban World Parks Congress resulted in recommendations that gave new responsibilities to various groups, especially governments and international and national conservation NGOs. A number of these recommendations have been addressed, including for example, the provision of funding for protected areas, and the creation of a protected area network (RAPAC). However, some recommendations have remained on paper only—unimplemented – especially those relating to the need to take into account indigenous peoples in the management of protected areas, and in the sharing of benefits from conservation. Objective 2 of the Programme of Work on indigenous peoples:

Goal 2.2 *To enhance and secure involvement of indigenous and local communities and relevant stakeholders.*

Target: *Full and effective participation by 2008, of indigenous and local communities, in full respect of their rights and recognition of their responsibilities, consistent with national law and applicable international obligations, and the participation of relevant stakeholders, in the management of existing, and the establishment of new, protected areas.*

has yet to be addressed. Many good words have been spoken in these large meetings, but there is a need to go further to address the issue of benefit sharing.

People forget quickly. In the Eastern Province of Cameroon the years 2006–2008 were a period of awakening as many workshops and meetings took place. Resistance by national government authorities to circulating information on amendments to the international policies discussed in these meetings is hindering development of the changes that could be secured at the local level.

The gap between rhetoric and reality in the field is huge. Some projects have been planned for carrying out with the communities but the communities do not even know about them. The projects chosen fail to take into account the real needs of the local people. Why invest in capacity building without any follow-up activity? Is this not a misuse of time and energy? Public figures have expressed their concerns:

We cannot wait any more for these issues to be discussed in workshops and conferences, and in committees without visible results. Today we need to act. Let us overcome the inertia, remove the obstacles, target the objectives, set the calendar of actions, and keep to the schedule

President Paul Biya in his speech to the nation, 31 December 2007

During her field visit in 2008 to Baka communities near Lobeke National Park, the United States Ambassador to Cameroon stated that

We must now link conservation with social development .



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