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Community forest useful tool for poverty alleviation

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ESD integrated in 10 pilot schools in eastern Cameroon

The teaching of education for sustainable development (ESD) in 10 pilot schools in the East Region of Cameroon is improving the relationship between parents, teachers and pupils. Teachers are also using pupils' school games to develop ESD teaching modules

Sustainable Forest Management:

Community forest useful tool for poverty alleviation



Community forests are proving to be useful tools in poverty alleviation and development of communities around protected areas in eastern Cameroon. However, weaknesses observed in management could compromise revenue generated and the sustainability of the forest.

An evaluation WWF and MINFOF (Ministry of forestry and wildlife) carried out on the management of 15 community forests in the Boumba and Ngoko Division of the East Region of Cameroon in 2017 shows that 1171 direct temporary jobs were created, with 30 and 15 percent of jobs for Baka and women respectively. Revenue generated from wood exploitation amounted to FCFA 72 million, exclusive of non-timber forest products. Of this sum, 60 percent was dedicated to development projects such as education, health and housing while the remaining 40 percent was used for the day-to-day running of the community forest management body.

The report highlights weaknesses in the management process such as lack of information on environmental impact of wood exploitation, poor restoration of exploited forest and weak transparency in management of generated revenue.

To share the results of this evaluation, 40 local actors comprising community forest managers, representatives of local NGOs and personnel of the ministry of forestry and wildlife (MINFOF) met in Yokadouma on November 16. Organised by WWF and MINFOF, the meeting was used to train the participants on continued data collection on the socio-economic and environmental impact of the exploitation of community forests.

“The training was based on real needs of the actors involved in community forest management as we have from time to time noticed unorthodox practices due to ignorance on their part. These actors need constant training for more effective management for the wellbeing of the target populations,” explains Nicolas Tamafo, MINFOF local Delegate for Boumba and Ngoko Division.

Perspectives

Harmonising the price of a cubic metre of wood, ensuring continuous data on the socio-economic and environmental impact of wood exploitation and better accountability are actions participants agreed to undertake to improve revenue generated as well as overall management of their community forests.

“Some progress has been made compared to previous years. We are optimistic that if the weaknesses observed are addressed, community forests will have more impact in the lives of concerned communities while the natural environment would be maintained,” says Alphonse Ngniado, WWF Senior Forest Officer.

The Cameroon 1994 forestry and wildlife law provides that communities around protected areas can request and acquire the right to manage forest of up to 5000 hectares for a period of 25 years and use revenue accruing from the exploitation of timber and non-timber forest products to finance local development following a simple management plan. WWF supports communities in this process as a way to foster participatory and sustainable forest management.



Indigenous people's three-year strategic action plan prioritises education

Indigenous forest people in Southeast Cameroon want to shake off years of stigmatization and exclusion by encouraging their children to go to school and empower themselves through training opportunities. They also want to participate in decision-making processes.

Some 60,000 Baka, Bagyeli, Bakola and Bedzang live in the rain forest of the East, South and Centre regions of Cameroon and have often faced various forms of marginalisation and stigmatisation due to their attachment to the forest. That is gradually changing as indigenous people have been showing greater interest in education.

Under the banner of RACOPY (an NGO that groups several indigenous people representatives, indigenous people CSOs and NGOs working on indigenous people issues), Baka, Bgayeli, Bakola and Bedzang are organising themselves and making their voices heard through various platforms. Through this grouping, the indigenous people (IP) met recently in Djoum, South Region of Cameroon, and elaborated a three-year strategic plan (2019-2021) in which they indicate their desire to encourage their children to go to school. They also indicated that they would identify training needs and opportunities for capacity building.

Working with WWF

Over the years, WWF's work with indigenous peoples has resulted in the elaboration of an innovative strategy for the education of Baka children, the putting in place of a complaint mechanism that records and follows up cases of abuse of Baka rights, and a process for the signing of

memorandum of understanding with park managers that grants IPs free access right into the forest. Through a Baka Education Project WWF initiated in 2013, over 500 Baka children have benefitted bursaries, didactic material and fees paid for public exams.

These initiatives have been realised thanks to support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the WWF Indigenous Peoples (IPs) Project and the Swedish Postcode Lottery (PKL) Project.

Through their strategic action plan, IP hope to adopt an internal mechanism for the management of conflicts, create and manage a website, identify needs and opportunities for training and elaborate and put in place a capacity-building plan.

The IPs also plan to develop close collaboration with the Cameroon elections management body (ELECAM), the national civil status registry and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS).

"It is encouraging to see that the initiatives and work we have been doing with Baka is making an impact. It is important to see Baka come together and elaborate a strategic action plan," says Moise Kono, WWF Cameroon IP Officer.

"WWF will continue to work with RACOPY to enable them realise these lofty ideas that would enable the Baka take charge of their future," he adds.

ESD integrated in 10 pilot schools in Eastern Cameroon

For the first time in eastern Cameroon, 10 primary schools have begun the teaching and learning of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), a practical method that integrates the Whole School Approach involving teachers, pupils and parents.

Supported by WWF Sweden, the 10 pilot schools (including a Baka school) situated around Nki National Park and the Ngoyla Wildlife Reserve are benefitting from this innovative educational approach. ESD has recorded remarkable success in the Southwest region of Cameroon with ESD included in the country's school curricula.

To introduce ESD in Eastern Cameroon, WWF facilitators trained 10 teachers and head teachers of 10 primary schools in 2017 and 2018. The teachers are now working to develop pupils' local games to facilitate the learning process. The trainees are carrying out ESD activities in their school communities and considerable improvements have been reported in the collaboration between teachers, parents and pupils. The schools have also improved their hygiene and sanitation, while some schools have developed their master plans and action plans for the year.

Baka and Bantu pupils of Assoumdele II Village where WWF donated a two-classroom structure in August 2018 are also benefitting from this innovative approach to learning.



Assoumdele's Flower of Gratitude



Germund Sellgren's maiden trip into the heart of the Congo basin rain forest took him to several indigenous people communities including the remote Assoumdele Village in the East Region of Cameroon (some 600 km from the capital city Yaounde). Germund who was leading a WWF Sweden delegation met an indigenous Baka community whose educational hopes had been dimmed because a whirlwind had blown down their thatch school structure. The community faced a serious challenge accessing school. Thanks to Germund, WWF Sweden supported the construction of a two-classroom building in the village, where some 100 Baka and Bantu children are learning.

In December 2018, three years later, Germund is back in Assoumdele and is welcome by a joyous community. He is offered a bouquet of flower as a sign of gratitude from an entire community.

Baka women learn to process, sell non-timber forest products



Dimpam and Djassa villages in the East Region of Cameroon on the processing and commercialisation of njansang. The training initially targeted about 40 Baka women in Dimpam and Djassa villages but drew interest from men and youths as well as women of neighbouring villages.

Working in collaboration with local NGO (AAFEEN), the CAMEFN training focused on best practices related to the processing and commercialisation of njansang and the donation of pots to each of the trainees to facilitate the sustainability of the work on njansang. The pot is a prized kitchen utensil in African homes and an essential tool in processing njansang.

“I am very happy today. You can see that all the women are celebrating. This is the first time we are receiving this kind of training and support. We have been using njansang just for our homes till recently when we were sensitised by AAFEBEN to collect njansang at large scale and commercialise it like others do,” says Jeanette Dojoh, Baka woman of Dimpam Village.

Lydie Adjelle, local Baka animator, adds that the training is not only timely but also very important for the villages, particularly women who mostly collect, process and sell njansang.

The njansang is a highly valued nut collected in the tropical forest and used in cooking various kinds of soup in many Central and West African countries including Cameroon, Nigeria and Ghana. The huge demand for njansang makes it a product of high commercial value and a prime source of income for most.

Non timber forest products (NTFPs) constitute the main source of revenue for most women in forest areas in eastern Cameroon as they provide sorely needed income that boost household earnings.

Yet indigenous (Baka) women who entirely depend on the forest for their livelihood are yet to fully exploit this opportunity. Baka women have traditionally collected NTFPs like njansang (*Ricinodendron heudelottii*) and bush mango at small scale and use them just for household consumption. This is gradually changing as they have recently begun selling their njansang albeit with a lot of challenges.

In a bid to prod the Baka women and enable them generate considerable revenue out of NTFPs, a group of women under the banner of Alumni Cameroon EFN (CAMEFN), Cameroon supported by EFN USA, have trained over 50 Baka women of

Besides collecting NTFPs, Dimpam Baka women practice agriculture. They work in groups, taking turns to work on each other's farms. They produce food crops like groundnuts, plantains and maize to feed their families. However, they face challenges carrying out farming as they lack basic farm tools and training to increase their yields.

“The training and donation we carried out have been well received by the Baka communities, particularly women. We saw the interest from other communities and we think we need to do more,” states Anne Ntongho, CAMEFN Coordinator.

Law Enforcement:

Training for rangers, law enforcement agents in TRIDOM landscape

Within the frame work of effective law enforcement relating to wildlife protection in the TRIDOM landscape, WWF has supported the training of **eighteen (18)** magistrates, forestry and wildlife, police, gendarmerie and customs agents, specifically from Cameroon and the Republic of Congo.

This training falls under the framework of the implementation of the project titled *“protection of elephants and great apes in the TRIDOM: support to local communities and law enforcement agents in the fight against wildlife crime”* which aims to reinforce the operational capacity of at least 40% of law enforcement agents in the TRIDOM landscape.

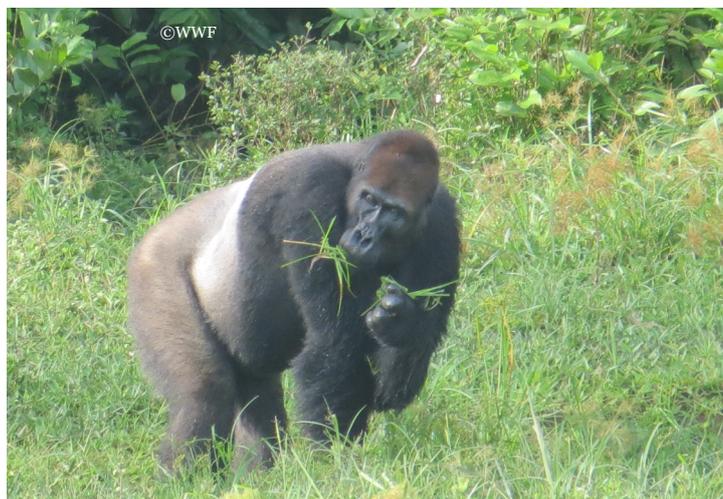
These agents gained practical insight on identification techniques of wildlife products, information sharing tools applicable in wildlife crime and reinforcing transnational collaboration.

Meanwhile, WWF in collaboration with TRAFFIC organised training for trainers targeting 14 rangers from Boumba Bek, Nki, Waza and Benoue national parks. The training that ra from 18-29 November focused on the fight against poaching. It had a South African trainer from the SAWC and three trainers from the Wildlife School in Garoua as well as officials of the central services of the Cameroon ministry of forestry and wildlife (MINFOF).



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Fruit trees phonology monitored to determine movements of gorilla in Lobeke



Monitoring of the phonological cycle of fruit trees consumed by great apes was carried out in two key sites; Djembé and Pont Cassé. The results indicate that the moment is unfavorable to observe great apes in the assessed areas due to the rarity of fruits. Contrary to Djembé there are more fruits in Pont Cassé to attract great apes. This information is important to mainstream ecotourism and anti-poaching works to ensure the areas of the great apes are secured.

Happy New Year 2019



Visiting WWF Sweden delegation flanked by men, women, children and the Chief of Messok-Messok Village (Ngoyla sub-division) inside their community forest. This intact evergreen forest has been preserved against timber exploitation thanks to a WWF payment for environmental services (PES) project funded by the European Union. Messok-Messok villagers hope to create an eco-tourism site in their forest

Thanks for your support



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