



NEWSLETTER

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# Jengi



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## Baka see brighter future as WWF and Plan International launch new project



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# Baka see brighter future as WWF, Plan International launch new project

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WWF/Plan project puts smile on faces of Baka in Southeast Cameroon

Indigenous people in Southeast Cameroon see a brighter future following the launch of a WWF- Plan International project aimed at empowering the Baka and improving on their living conditions.

The project entitled *Rights, Resilience and a Sustainable future for the Baka people, their children and forests in Cameroon*, was launched on September 14, 2017 in Abong Mbang, eastern Cameroon, in the presence of Baka leaders, traditional rulers, local administrative and council authorities as well as representatives of local NGOs.

Baka representatives and other actors at the launch, expressed optimism that the project will enable them take charge of their destiny and reduce abuse of their rights.

The 24-month project, which will be implemented in ten Baka communities in the southeast of the country, envisages the construction of schools and wells, inclusion of Baka in decision-making processes and management of natural resources. Through this scheme, WWF and Plan International seek to address the inequity prevailing in the management of natural resources and promote the joint distribution of benefits and other advantages derived from forest management.

Baka have various expectations from the project. "I am excited at this project; it addresses our key concerns," says Badje Basil, Baka chief of Lessou Village in Dimako subdivision. "We face enormous difficulties with the education of our children; buying books and uniforms. I am hopeful that these will soon end," he says.

To Boleka Jean Marie, a Baka development agent, Baka should be fully integrated in the entire process. "Baka need support in acquiring birth certificates and national identity cards in order to fully enjoy their rights of citizenship and access to school. Considering the activi-

ties envisaged in the project; building of schools and wells in the villages, I think it will improve the living conditions of Baka," states Boleka.

Sanding Mekong Bathelemy, head of a government-run social action services (SAS) working with Baka populations in Ngoyla sub-division, thinks it is an innovative project as it lays emphasis on durability and the forest. "We know that the forest is the natural milieu of Baka and they already face threats and abuses in this milieu. If this persists, we risk losing them completely. I am hopeful they will be empowered to better face the future," states Sanding.

## Baka - indispensable in forest management

WWF and other local actors recognize the important role Baka play in the forest. "The management of natural resources cannot be done without the contribution of Baka. They were here before anyone else and they master the forest better than any of us," states Gilles Etoga, WWF Jengi TRIDOM Programme Manager.

"Unfortunately their knowledge of the forest also makes them vulnerable to poachers and others who take advantage and abuse their rights," he says.

"This project is for long-term development and will go a long way to improve the lives of Baka," says Nleme Georges, Plan International representative for the East Region. WWF and Plan International will work with local NGOs and government actors to implement the project.

The Baka are an indigenous community living mostly in Southeast Cameroon. The community is estimated at 26,000 individuals who depend partially or entirely on the forest and its resources for their livelihoods.

# Local actors' views on WWF, Plan International project

## Baka should take their destiny into their hands



It is a good thing, but we as Baka parents have to encourage our children to go to school because without education one is nothing in life. Our children face difficulties related to lack of books and uniforms for school. Some treat Baka like slaves, obliging them to work on their

farms. Even in sharing of natural resources, the Bantu cheat us. These have to end. My expectation is that Baka have to take their destiny into their own hands.

**Badje Basil,**

*Baka Chief of Lossou Village, Dimako*

## Modern toilets for Baka

I expect that this project attains its objectives. Already I have seen envisaged activities like construction of classrooms, wells and toilets. At the end of this project, I would like to see modern toilets constructed where Baka children can feel at ease and well integrated like Bantu children in other villages.



**Mrs. Ntsana Mireille,**

*Basic Education Delegate, Haut Nyong*

## Huge project for Baka

It is a huge project for the future of Baka considering that two big structures; WWF and Plan, have come together to initiate it. This will guarantee that activities undertaken on the field, be it with civil society organisations or with local people, benefit the Baka. Baka face challenges related to citizenship. Many Baka children do not have birth certificates and national identity cards. This is a major hindrance to access to education.



**Boleka Jean Marie**

*Development Agent of Missoume Village, Abong Mbang*

## Reinforces our action on the field

This initiative reinforces our actions on the field. These are targets that don't often get the required attention. The tasks on the field are many and we are unable to reach all groups due to limited means. This is a group of people that often feel marginalized; therefore reaching them would resolve that.

**Mrs. Ankoa Ndjel Abatte,**

*Delegate of Women's Empowerment and the Family, Haut Nyong Division*



## We wish to see Baka develop

There are lots of things that are being done with regards to Baka, considering the numerous challenges they face. Our expectations are that this project should support what is being done on the field. We wish to see the Baka develop like everyone else.



**Atagouou Sebastien,**

*Social Affairs Delegate, Upper Nyong*

## Laudable initiative

This initiative is very laudable considering the socio-economic, cultural and political situation of Baka communities within the zone. Issues of governance and participation in decision-making within the frame work of this project will contribute to the emergence of Baka elite that will participate in decision making at local and national levels. However, we decry the fact that it is just a 2-year project and will be implemented just within 10 communities.



**Victor Amougou**

*CEO CEFAID*



# “We need to save forest elephants for our children”

## *Baka and Bantu community elders highlight the importance of protecting biodiversity*

Indigenous communities like the Baka have lived in and around the forests of the Congo Basin for centuries. They know every twist and turn and are incredible story-tellers about life in the forest and the value of nature to our life, health and well-being. But industrial-scale poaching is leaving many pockets of their inspiration – the dense rainforests – silent and bereft.

Between 2014 and 2016, elephant populations within and along the margins of protected areas in Cameroon, Gabon, Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic declined by 66 per cent. While the sharp fall in elephant numbers is slowly but irreversibly altering the forest and its ecosystems already, their loss is also being felt by members of the local and indigenous communities.

Mbwapeh, 67, a Baka community elder who grew up practically rubbing shoulders with animals, can now only tell nostalgic tales to his children. “My children might not have the same opportunity to rub shoulders with elephants as I had when I was young. For one to see elephants these days, you need to go deep into the forest where they keep a safe distance from human presence,” he says.

The current massacre of elephants for ivory in the Congo Basin revolts Mbwapeh who, in 2006, led the first WWF team to the Ikwa forest clearing, inside Nki. In the Baka dialect, Ikwa means ‘a place where elephants converge to feed’.

Mbwapeh remembers moments from his childhood when he used to ‘play’ hide and seek with elephants fondly: “I learned from my father how to trail elephants and find out their hideouts. That is the reason why I was the one who was able to lead the WWF team to Ikwa,” states Mbwapeh. “We saw so many elephants in Ikwa that day. I cannot tell how many there were altogether, but I know they were so many, including gorillas and chimpanzees,” he says.

Sadly, should current rates of poaching continue unabated, there may soon be no elephants left to count. On average, one African elephant is illegally killed every 25 minutes.



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*“My children might not have the same opportunity to rub shoulders with elephants as I had when I was young.”*

“As a young man living with my parents, we practically lived with animals, especially elephants. Gorillas and elephants lived so close by; all we had to do to scare them away was to light a fire. Seeing them today is a matter of luck and a lot of efforts,” says Felix Mimbamidom, a local Bantu chief in the village of Koumdom II. Mimbamidom fears the younger generation will not have the opportunity to see animals as he did.

“That is why I appreciate the work of the park’s conservation service that is relentlessly trying to tackle poaching in a bid to protect these animals. We need to protect these species, especially the elephant for our children,” he adds.

Protecting the remaining elephants and other threatened wildlife species in the Congo Basin is a big challenge for governments and conservation organizations as organized crime syndicates deepen their reach into wildlife poaching and trafficking. In Nki national park in eastern Cameroon, elephant numbers plunged from 3,167 in 2012 to a mere 565 in 2015. But, there is still hope.

For Kouamé Paul N’GORAN, Coordinator of the Biomonitoring Programme for WWF in Central Africa, there are reasons to be optimistic. “With the findings from the wildlife inventories, governments have the means for decision making in order to stop the hemorrhage. Some have started doing so after a presentation of the results,” N’GORAN says.

“The Cameroon government is currently revising its wildlife and forestry law to toughen sanctions on defaulters. Should these efforts continue, elephants and other wildlife species in central Africa could be safe again,” concluded N’GORAN. “

Illegal trade in wildlife, including timber and fish comprises the fourth largest global illegal trade after narcotics, counterfeiting of products and currency, and human trafficking, and is estimated to be worth at least US\$19 billion per year.



Mbwapeh (top), Mimbamidom: Two Ngoyla elites hope their children can grow up to see elephants as they did

*“We need to protect these species, especially the elephant, for our children.”*



## ANTI-POACHING

# Ivory trafficker surrenders, offers to support anti-poaching fight



A 'notorious' elephant poacher has voluntarily surrendered to rangers and offered to contribute to the fight against poaching in eastern Cameroon.

Christian Moka, who killed five elephants in a forest clearing inside Nki National Park in July 2017, gave himself up during a sting operation launched in the town of Moloundou on Cameroon's borders with the Republic of Congo on September 23. According to rangers, Moka has wreaked havoc in protected areas in Cameroon and Congo for seven years.

Moka said he decided to abandon poaching because, "I am tired of always running away and abandoning my family. I have been in jail once for elephant poaching. I do not want to go to jail again. I wish to join the fight against poaching," he told rangers during his arrest. Moka has been transferred to Yokadouma, where he might be tried.

## Poachers forestalled

Meanwhile, park rangers and soldiers from Cameroon have forestalled a mission by a gang of poachers targeting elephants in protected areas bordering Cameroon and Gabon. The action by the combined squad forced the poachers to flee to neighbouring Gabon through River Ayina abandoning a rifle, ammunition and a huge quantity of foodstuff.

The squad launched a sting operation from 18 to 22 September 2017, acting on a tip off. The poachers who were camped on the banks of River Ayina, jumped into the river abandoning a rifle (458), 42



Poachers fled abandoning arms, foodstuff

munitions, an axe and machetes, and stimulants (marijuana and tramadol commonly known as "Tramol").

Poaching gangs use the borders of Cameroon, Gabon, Central Africa Republic and the Republic of Congo, which serve as elephant corridors, to target the pachyderms. The South Region of Cameroon particularly the town of Djoum serves as major transit point for elephant tusks from the sub-region. However, recent joint operations by rangers from Cameroon and Gabon have contributed to curb the wanton killing of elephants.

"Collaboration between the conservation services of both countries with the support of the military is helping to reduce poaching of elephants," states Gilles Etoga, Program Manager of WWF Jengi TRIDOM.

"We have decided to support the Gabonese in order to stop the poachers from reaching the elephants considering that elephants migrate from one country to another," he adds.

# Communities trained to fight illegal practices in forest sector



© Chrystal Medjo / WWF

CPF members came from six villages across the area

Fifty-four people from six village forest management committees, known in this area as Comité Paysan Forêt (CPF) have been trained to better play their role in combating illegal activities and contribute to sustainable management of the forest.

The members drawn from villages around three logging concessions in the periphery of Boumba-Bek National Park are expected to ensure effective participation of local populations in forest management by acting as intermediaries for dialogue between the local populations, the administration and logging companies. Through its collaboration with a logging company called ALPICAM GRU-CAM, aimed at fostering respect for environmental best practices and rational exploitation of forest resources, WWF envisages actions that directly impact on communities around its forest management units, particularly empowering members of CPF to enable them fully play their role.

In this light WWF in collaboration with Cameroon's Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and ALPICAM organized training workshops to hone the skills of 54 representatives of village forest management committees, including Baka, in Boumba and Ngoko and Kadey divisions of the East Region of Cameroon.

"Considering that most CPF members were recently elected, this training was an opportunity for them to acquire knowledge to effectively act as the interface between their communities and forest managers," states Alphonse Ngniado, WWF Senior Forest Officer.

The training focused on the role of CPFs, the fight against illegal forest exploitation through denunciation and participation of members of the communities in the sustainable management of logging concessions.

To most participants, the training was timely. "This training will enable me better monitor issues related to environmental protection, identify and denounce illegal practices in logging concessions," says Lazare Okouou, Chief of Boumndel Village. "With this training a lot of things will change relating to my work because before now we did not have knowledge on how to carry out our tasks," he adds.

For Marie Louis Akpwa, from Batouri, regular training sessions should be organised. "We will share what we have learnt with our communities so that many more people are aware of the role they have to play vis-a-vis sustainable forest exploitation," Akpwa states.



## BIOMONITORING:

# Elephants, great apes 'friendlier' in Nki

© Eliane Choutmoun/WWF



Ikwa forest clearing (known in Baka dialect as bais) in Nki National Park, once the home of elephants before poachers sent them into hiding, is now attracting these pachyderms again. For six months running, biomonitoring teams bring back photos of elephants, buffaloes, colobus monkeys and speeding panthers caught on camera traps. The elephants have regained confidence thanks to the permanent deployment of forest rangers around the clearing.

Thanks to additional support provided by WWF Netherlands, the conservation services now station park rangers around the bais on a rotational system on permanent basis. With this support, base camps and watchtowers were built in Ikwa and Pondo clearings, while field material for game rangers such as tents, camera traps, Inreach Delorme were provided, facilitating both biomonitoring and anti-poaching missions.

Regular biomonitoring during this period has shown continuous wildlife presence in Ikwa and Pondo bais in Nki and Boumba-Bek national parks. Elephants and great apes are more regular at the bais. Camera traps placed at strategic points have also filmed poachers who come near the bais to target game, particularly elephants.





# Ikwa, Pondo forest clearings get watchtowers, base camps



©Rene Meigari/ WWF

Ikwa and Pondo, two key forest clearings in Nki and Boumba-Bek National parks regularly monitored for wildlife species, are now equipped with watchtowers and base camps. A new watchtower was built in Ikwa considering that the first one was in an advanced stage of dilapidation and presented potential danger for bio-monitoring teams and tourists. A watchtower was constructed in Pondo clearing for the first time too that permits bio-monitoring teams and tourists to



view wildlife. These infrastructures, coupled with the provision of modern technological devices to the conservation services of the parks, such as Conquests, solar panels and computers for database, as well as camping equipments have greatly boosted anti-poaching and bio-monitoring activities within the protected areas.

“These were achieved thanks to funding from WWF Netherlands to provide sorely needed infrastructures for Nki and Boumba Bek. I think it is great boost for our activities especially rendering the bio-monitoring and anti-poaching teams more effective,” states Gilles Etoga, Jengi TRIDOM Programme Manager.

## WWF rehabilitates stand taps for six communities around Lobeke



© Ernest Sumelong / WWF

Six communities around Lobeke National Park now have access to potable water thanks to WWF. An estimated 23,000 people in the periphery of the park live in dire conditions characterized by poverty, diseases and malnutrition, according to WWF findings. The situation is made worse owing to the influx of over 3000 refugees who fled civil unrest in Central African Republic. This disturbing situation worsened the quality of hygiene

and sanitation in households within local communities, resulting in a high demand for potable water in the villages. Shortage of medical personnel in the area leaves many locals vulnerable as more adults and children die from diarrhea, HIV/AIDS, fever and malaria. The entire area counts only four trained medical doctors and 50 nurses, with a ratio of one doctor to about 6,000 people and one nurse to about 600 people.

Faced with this situation, WWF in collaboration with MINFOF (ministry of forestry and wildlife) initiated activities in 2015 aimed at improving the quality of drinking water, hygiene and sanitation in schools and households. Under the project christened *Support Water, Hygiene & Sanitation in Communities Living in the Jengi Forest, Cameroon*, WWF has been multiplying efforts to tackle health and hygiene challenges affecting most households in the communities. This includes easy access to potable water and a campaign to tackle HIV/AIDS and malnutrition targeting schools and households made up of Baka and Bantu.

# WWF National Director communes with Jengi Staff



© Djamweli Souaibou / WWF

A delegation of WWF CCPO senior management team staff led by the National Director, Dr. Hanson Njiforti, recently communed with Jengi staff in two field bases; Ngoyla and Mambele, and reminded them of the institution's core values. Accompanied by CCPO Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (Anne Ntongho) and the Biomonitoring Coordinator, Dr. Zacharie Nzooh, the National Director used the occasion to encourage the field staff to meet

high professional and ethical standards, while maintaining a spirit of solidarity.

Anne and Zacharie, two senior staff who have progressed through the ranks of the institution thanks to hard work and determination, shared their stories in a bid to motivate younger colleagues to be passionate and hard working. It was also an opportunity for field staff to share difficulties they face and get clarifications on certain WWF policies.

## Lamine Sebogo joins Jengi-TNS Program



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Lamine Sebogo, formerly WWF African Elephant Coordinator, has joined WWF Jengi-TNS team as Technical Advisor. Lamine brings to the Jengi TNS Program as well as Lobeke National Park 30 years of experience in conservation to strengthen the Program, which is one of WWF Cameroon Country Programme Office priority sites.

Lamine served in the Burkina Faso Ministry of Environment between 1988 and 1999 before joining IUCN West and Central Africa Regional Office in 1995 up to 2009. He would later join WWF in 2009 as African Elephant Coordinator from 2009 to 2017. Lamine who joined the TNS Program in September has already fit in so well at the Program base in Mambele.



# 35 wildlife species observed in five clearings in Lobeke NP

Wildlife monitoring carried out in five key forest clearings in Lobeke National Park between 2013 and 2016 has revealed the presence of 35 species, 31 being large and medium sized mammals. Analysis of data collected between 2013 and 2016 indicate a total observation effort of 1328 days (mainly 225 days in Petite Savane, 180 days in Djaloumbé, 317 days in Ndangayé, 365 days in Djanguï, 81 days in Bolo, 14 days in Ngoa and 146 around Djembe basis).

The 35 wildlife species detected in all the selected sites include mainly primates (12 species), bovidea (11 species) and carnivorous (seven species). It was observed that specie numbers have slightly declined since 2002 in all the selected sites except at Djembè base where a relative stability was observed. The study shows that Djanguï and Ndangayé forest clearings are the most important sites in the park where wildlife is mostly sighted.

Evaluation of the richness of the clearings with regards to the regularity of visits of emblematic wildlife species such as gorillas, elephants, chimpanzees, buffaloes and bongo antelopes; reveal an abundance of gorillas in Ndangaye and Petit Savane. Elephants are mostly present in Ndangaye; buffaloes were mostly recorded in Njangui, Ndangaye and Djaloumbe, while sitatungas are more present in Njangui, Ndangaye, Petit Savane and Bolo.

This data provides clear indications to guide tourists and researchers on where to go to watch what species. It also provides a guide to the park's anti-poaching team on elaborating strategies on safeguarding these clearings.



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# Thanks for your Support



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