



A monthly publication of WWF Jengi Programme in Southeast Cameroon

October 2018 Edition

## WWF, partners join efforts to secure IPs rights



**Our Newsletter moves from a quarterly to a monthly. So much to capture within the Jengi landscape. We are always excited to share with you our stories.**



## Indigenous People

# WWF, partners join efforts to secure IPs access rights

WWF, 20 other NGOs and representatives of indigenous peoples have agreed to work in synergy to enhance access rights of Baka and Bagyeli people to protected areas in Southeast Cameroon. For this to be achieved, the NGOs agreed, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) initiated since 2006 between indigenous communities and conservation services of some protected areas, to secure their free access rights, has to be signed.

The NGOs met in the town of Abong Mbang in the East Region of Cameroon in a bid to seek ways to accelerate the process for the signing of MoU and to extend the initiative to logging concessions and sports hunting zones. Participants including representatives of Baka and Bagyeli communities, WWF and RACOPY (*Réseau Recherches Actions Concertées Pygmées*) noted significant progress towards obtaining free access rights to natural resources for this vulnerable group.

So far, WWF, working with local partners, initiated MoU processes that resulted in the signing of two agreements: one between Bagyelis and the conservation service of Campo Ma'an National Park and the other between Baka and the Ngoyla Wildlife Reserve.

“Since the signing of the MoU we have greater access to natural resources in Campo Ma'an National Park,” says Jeanne Biloa, President of Bagyeli Cultural and Development Association (BACUDA). “We have been carrying out our activities in the forest without any major problems,” she adds.

“Like our Bagyeli brothers we need to finalise this process between our communities and the conservation service of Lobeke National Park so that we can also enjoy unrestricted access into the forest,” says Yana Nicolas, representative of Baka of Salapoumbe and Moloundou subdivisions in the East Region of Cameroon.

The NGOs agreed to continue reflecting on the implementation of a mechanism initiated to follow up cases of abuse of the rights of Baka and Bagyeli people and to elaborate a roadmap for better support for indigenous people involved in MoU processes. They called on the government to ensure the participation of the concerned communities in the entire process.



Concerted effort is giving renewed hope for Baka access right

## Optimism

The meeting brought together actors with hitherto different views regarding the MoU process. They agreed to harmonize their voices and elaborate a road map to achieve free access for indigenous peoples. To Moise Kono, WWF IP Coordinator, the meeting is a step in the right direction. “Recommendations of this meeting will be tabled to the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and the endorsement by government will be an important step towards achieving free access rights for all IP communities around protected areas,” states Kono.

## Adopting solar solutions:

# Up to 40 percent saved in fuel consumption

Up to 40 percent of the amount spent on fuel to power a 40KVC generator to power the Jengi TRIDOM office in Ngoyla (Nki National Park) is being saved thanks to alternative solar energy solutions the Programme adopted in late 2017. Situated in a remote and highly enclave area in eastern Cameroon, Ngoyla lacks electricity supply and getting fuel is costly.

For years the WWF office and housing quarters for staff have relied on a 40KVC generator plant to provide electricity, with a huge financial toll on fuel consumption. However, adopting alternative power sources such as solar panels and power saving batteries is reducing fuel cost and pollution.

“As a conservation organization we had to set the example by reducing pollution and so we decided to try solar energy by investing in solar panels and rechargeable batteries that can store up energy during the day,” states Gilles Etoga, Jengi TRIDOM Programme Manager.

“While we are yet to make a hundred percent switch to solar energy, the result is encouraging. We have experienced a 40 percent reduction in fuel consumption. For this to be effective, the office needs to invest heavily in high performing solar panels to get full benefits,” he adds.

The Jengi TRIDOM programme has also supplied biomonitoring teams with portable solar panels and rechargeable batteries for use during field missions inside the park.



Solar gadgets providing sustainable alternatives to fuel

## Jengi TRIDOM Programme gets Baka community facilitators



Yvette Mongondji at the Mambele Office

The Jengi TRIDOM Programme has been enriched with the arrival of two new staff. Gaston Mane and Yvette Mongondji, two indigenous Baka of Ngoyla and Salapoumbe villages in East Cameroon have joined the Jengi TRIDOM Programme team, as community facilitators. Mane and Mongondji are educated and enlightened Baka who have been playing leadership roles,

serving as spokespeople for their various communities. They will serve as a community facilitators and communication relay agents for all actions with the Baka.

They were recruited this October 2018 within the framework of a joint WWF-Plan International Cameroon project aimed to improve the socio-economic condition of Baka in 10 villages. Gaston Mane who is not new to the house will be instrumental in galvanising and discussing with Baka in the dialect.

Mongondji meanwhile previously worked with local NGO, CEFAID, working on issues related to rights of Baka. She is a respected voice within her native Salapoumbe Village. They will serve as interpreters and facilitators during meetings with Baka and awareness raising campaigns. “I am excited at this opportunity, as it will enable me serve my people better and improve their understanding of the work WWF is doing with them,” states Mongondji.

Their presence within the Jengi team promises to greatly improve WWF interaction with Baka communities. The two are already well settled with other WWF colleagues in their work stations in Ngoyla and Mambele.



# Why a piece of paper is trailing new hope among indigenous communities

Indigenous communities like the Baka have lived in and around the forests of Southeast Cameroon for centuries, depending on nature for their lives and livelihoods. Over generations, these forests have been the places where their children learn, train and grow.

“We, Baka people, did not only grow in the village; the forest is like a training centre for us. We train our children in the forest and carry out our traditional rites there,” states Yana Nicolas, Baka leader and Councillor of Dioula Village.

There is indeed no denying the special place forests hold in the Baka’s hearts and cultures.

Unfortunately, another reality that is impossible to deny are the pressures Cameroon’s forests are increasingly facing from unsustainable development, illegal mining and wildlife crime.

Creating protected areas is one way the government aims to preserve Cameroon’s incredible forests and biodiversity but in doing so, ensuring access for the Baka and other indigenous communities, relying on these lands for their well-being, has been a challenge.

## Until now.

Following several years of efforts and dialogue, Cameroon’s Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife is on the verge of signing a much-awaited memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Baka for greater and improved access to the country’s Boumba-Bek and Lobeke national parks. The breakthrough comes following a June 2018 meeting attended by representatives of indigenous communities, WWF and other NGOs to chart a way forward.

“We welcome the idea of the MoU and we are anxiously waiting for the Forestry administration to sign it,” states Adjina Ernest, President of Baka Association (ASBABUK) and leader of Bakas of Mbateka Village, east region of Cameroon. “The MoU, as explained to us, is like a marriage between the Baka people and the park administrators and will guide us on how to function,” Adjina says.

While the MoU marks an important step forward, community representatives underline the importance of increasing awareness on the MoU among the Baka to ensure its success.

“Further sensitisation should be carried out in the villages so as to get everyone to the same level of understanding of the MoU,” adds Adjina.

For Bibi Joseph, Baka of Yenga Village, “many Baka do not know the importance of the MoU. They don’t know that with this document, they will have free access into



MoU would grant Baka free and access right into their ‘home’

protected areas unlike before and that it will serve as their passport to go into the forest without much restriction.”

Having supported the process for similar MoUs with the Bagyeli community around Campo Ma’an National Park and the Baka communities living around the Ngoyla Wildlife Reserve in Cameroon, WWF-Cameroon stands ready to assist the community in understanding and following the MoU as it comes into being.

“If well implemented, this MoU will enhance Baka’s access to resources of protected areas and improve synergy between indigenous people and Cameroon’s Forest and Wildlife administration, needed to ensure sustainable management of natural resources,” says Dr. Hanson Njiforti, WWF Cameroon Country Director.

Anti-poaching:

# Rangers battle armed poachers in eastern Cameroon



Relentless war by Lobeke and Nki national parks conservation services is weakening poachers' ability to strike

Rangers in eastern Cameroon are increasingly facing up to armed poachers aiming at elephants in protected areas. Park authorities in Nki and Lobeke national parks have stepped up the fight against poaching, which poses serious threats to wildlife in the area. In less than a month, rangers of Lobeke and Nki have arrested five suspected poachers and handed them to the judiciary to face trial.

The rangers arrested the suspects in two separate anti-poaching missions launched in September 2018. Rangers of Lobeke National Park arrested two poachers, seizing 9 guns and over 300 ammunitions in the process. They transferred the suspects to Yokadouma where they risk three years in prison for poaching or up to 10 years for possessing war guns.

Meanwhile, collaboration between Cameroonian rangers of Nki National Park and their Congolese colleagues led to the arrest of three poachers suspected of killing two elephants in Nki. The three were arrested on the border between Cameroon and Congo during a transborder operation carried out in September. Among the suspects is Xavier MINDA, a notorious and wanted elephant poacher within the locality.

Elephant poaching, mostly carried out by organised transborder criminal gangs, has caused the decline of an estimated 66% of forest elephants in the Central Africa sub-region, according to a WWF survey. Given the scale of poaching and its threat to elephants roaming within the Cameroon-Congo corridor, the two countries have reinforced collaboration to tackle the ill. The transborder collaboration is proving fruitful as Cameroonian and Congolese park authorities have been closing in on poachers and arresting their kingpins.

A similar joint anti-poaching mission carried out earlier this year resulted in the arrest of a notorious poacher, Mouelle Liboire, and the seizure of an AK47 rifle and ammunition. Liboire and his accomplices had for long raided Nki and Lobeke parks killing scores of elephants. "Working in collaboration with our Congolese counterparts gives us the leverage to better protect our borders and dismantle criminal gangs targeting elephants," states Siroma Jean, Conservator of Nki National Park.



Law Enforcement:

# Surveillance reinforced at Nki, Boumba Bek inter-zone



Routine control at Nki-Boumba Bek national parks inter-zones helping to curb illegal activities

The conservation services of Nki and Boumba Bek national parks have taken steps to reinforce security at their inter-zones. The parks services have installed teams of eco-guards in this important sector. This follows a meeting held in Malea Ancien (meeting point between the two parks) with the participation of the conservators of both parks and 15 personnel including eco-guards, chiefs of sectors and WWF Park Assistant. As a consequence, a joint anti-poaching operation carried out by the conservation services of Nki and Boumba Bek national parks in the inter-zone of the parks covered 300km with an estimated effort of 138 man-days. The operation resulted in the seizure of one rifle

(carabine), 28 ammunitions and 02 motorcycles; 02 poachers' camps as well as 12 huts destroyed; 95 people sensitized with 09 signing undertakings never to engage in illegal hunting.

## Two arrested near Mengame Gorilla Sanctuary

An anti-poaching operation organized around the Mengame Gorilla Sanctuary touched three key axes; Alati-Lélé-Mintom; BI-Djoum-Mebane; Yen-Oveng-Amvom, covering 215km within a period of 05 days for a total of 134 man-days. Two people arrested; 02 guns, 01 motorcycle and over 500 wire snares seized and three poachers' camps destroyed.



Wire snares and marijuana were seized while two suspects were arrested around Mengame



## Bio-monitoring:

# 238 kilometres covered in Lobeke wildlife survey

As part of an ongoing wildlife survey in the Cameroon-TNS landscape, 11 data collection teams have completed 119 transects, representing a sampling effort of 238 kilometers.

The wildlife inventory launched in August 2018 aims to estimate the population of large and medium-sized mammal and to appreciate the intensity of poaching pressure on these species. The US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) and the Trinational de la Sangha Foundation (FTNS) are financially supporting the cost of this activity.

In Lobeke, wildlife inventories are carried after every four years to gauge the health of the park and reach important decisions.

During the large mammal survey in October rangers of Lobéké National Park dismantled 450m of wire snares aimed at game in the park.



Ranger taking down GPS point

## Heavy rains flood Pondo, Ikwa base camps



Pondo base camp inundated as the Bek River outstretched itself due to persistent downpour

Torrential rains have poured this year unlike any one has seen in previous years. This has taken a toll on the poor state of the roads in the East Region where the Jengi landscape is situated. The effects have also been felt in the forest. Not only are the roads impracticable and make commuting within the landscape tasky, our bio-monitoring teams are also finding it hard in the forest. The Bek River running through the Boumba Bek National Park has overflown its banks, flooding most parts of access roads and the base camps. The base camp at Pondo clearing is practically in water, forcing our bio-monitoring teams to relocate to safer places. The case is similar in Nki as part of the base camp in Ikwa is also flooded.



# Photo of the Month

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The Big Cat (the Leopard) caught on camera trap in Nki National Park. This elusive animal is one of the Big Five wildlife species found in the Jengi forest. Like the elephant, it is one of the threatened species in the park, often targeted for its decorative skin often used as a symbol of power by traditional rulers.

Against a backdrop of poaching pressure, WWF and its government partner, the Ministry of forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) are deploying every available resources to ensure their safety .



# Harmonising food security and conservation in Lobeke



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Women group of Mambele carrying out sustainable agriculture to meet nutrition challenge thanks to WWF support

In a landscape characterised by poverty, hunger and difficult access to health conditions, how do you balance food security, nutrition and conservation? This is the challenge that the Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group (ABCG) PHE project has been attempting to meet around Lobeke National Park in eastern Cameroon between 2015 and 2018.

Activities within the scope of this project related to nutrition and food security, family planning and sustainable agriculture have enabled the identification of cross-cutting solutions relating to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in communities living in the buffer zone of Lobeke National Park.

Read the “Lessons Learned in Exploring Linkages Between Food Security, Nutrition and Conservation through PHE in the Jengi Forest, Southeast Cameroon”.

[http://awsassets.wwf.org.za/downloads/wwf\\_abcg\\_phe\\_2015\\_2018\\_lessonslearned.pdf](http://awsassets.wwf.org.za/downloads/wwf_abcg_phe_2015_2018_lessonslearned.pdf)

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