



SAWA

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Human Elephant Conflict: Mount Cameroon National Park launches the SAFE System Approach



Partners, stakeholders and affected communities pledge their support and collaboration

WWF Cameroon and the Programme for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources for the South West Region (PSMNR-SWR), on August 11, 2022, brought together key stakeholders to discuss efforts aimed at managing the recent Human Elephant Conflict that has been raging some communities of the Mount Cameroon National Park (MCNP).

Chaired by the Divisional Officer for the West Coast, the workshop brought together over 60 participants from the administration, the South West Regional Delegate for Forestry and Wildlife, the Mayor of the Idenau Council, the Conservator of the Mount Cameroon National Park, West Coast Cluster Facilitators, WWF,



The Divisional Officer for the West Coast being welcomed L-R Chief of Bakingili, Regional Delegate MINFOF & the Senior Field Program Coordinator, WWF Cameroon

Civil Society Organizations, Chiefs and community representatives from Bakingili, Njongi and Bomana, private sector representatives from the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), an Agro-industry, and some independent community members.

In his welcome address, the Chief of Bakingili recounts the ordeal he and his community have been facing with elephant conflicts. “I was even placed under house arrests by my community, pressurizing me to seek lasting solutions from Government. My community depends on their farms for livelihood, but today, most farms have been destroyed by the elephants and only the brave can attempt going to their farms. Children are scared from going to school because the elephants usually invade the school campuses.” HRH Chief Elive Joseph Mokunya said.

Officially opening the workshop, the Divisional Officer for the West Coast, expressed satisfaction with measures the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) and her partners like WWF have so far put in place to mitigate this human-elephant conflict. “I have been receiving numerous reports about the huge destruction of farms and attack of people by the elephants. There was a time the communities mounted a road block on my way from Idenau to Limbe, requesting for a lasting solution to the problem. It is my wish that the communities concerned collaborate with the park management and partners to achieve this plan of action that is being launched today”. Mr Stephen Ngai Ngong

The South West Regional Delegation of MINFOF and the park service, in collaboration with their partners, have in the past carried out numerous assessments on the damages caused by the elephants.

They have begun taking some management actions, including the use of fireworks, dummies and placing of 2-km chili belts and bee hives in some areas, to deter the elephants from coming towards human investments.

Data collection and preliminary observations, following these measures, suggest that the pepper fences had a limited effect, albeit short-lived, in deterring wildlife.

The main challenge was to find a permanent solution to the issue. After some reflections, MINFOF entrusted in the hands of WWF Cameroon to facilitate the process of developing a viable strategy to address the situation.

It is for this reason that a more pragmatic and inclusive approach that will guarantee sustainability and co-existence between the humans and the elephants is being sort for.

Addressing participants at the workshop, Mrs. Ikome Delphine, the Regional Delegate, MINFOF, acknowledged that it is the responsibility of MINFOF to protect wildlife, but also to look out for the wellbeing of the people.

She expressed concern that despite several measures taken by the ministry, this conflict still exist and is increasing as the days go by.

However, she encouraged the population to remain calm, and to support the consultant hired by WWF to implement this new approach. Madam Ikome reminded the communities of the touristic opportunity they may derive if elephants are protected.



Mme Ikome Delphine

“A national park will lose its value if there are no flagship species like the elephant. The elephant presence can attract tourists to the area, which is another source of income for the communities” she said. “Human Elephant Conflict concerns everyone. I am calling on all stakeholders, traditional rulers, the administrators to join MINFOF, WWF and other relevant partners to put hand on deck as we manage this conflict”
Mme Ikome Delphine, Regional Delegate, MINFOF, SWR.



Why the Safe Systems approach?

Human Wildlife Conflict is a Global Conservation Concern that needs to be urgently addressed.

It is within this framework that, in January 2022, a call for tender for the development of a long-term and integrated strategy to mitigate HWC, specifically with Elephants, in the MCNP and its peripheral zone was advertised, and a consultant selected.

The SAFE approach, which is the strategy proposed by WWF Cameroon is firmly rooted in the link between safe and beneficial coexistence of people and wildlife, in the management of human-wildlife conflict.

Finding long-term solutions to the HWC phenomenon is an important challenge for WWF Cameroon. However, there is considerable evidence from countries, such as India, that a combination of approaches and strategies is probably the most effective to manage human-wildlife conflicts.



“It is actually a community-driven approach. If everyone is committed to its implementation, then by the time we complete rolling out the action plan, we will be talking about the human elephant coexistence and not human elephant conflict. We will also be talking about a SAFE community, people, habitat, assets, and wildlife, if we implement and systematically monitor our actions” **Eno-Nku Manasseh, Consultant**

The consultant hired by WWF Cameroon to conduct the assessment, Mr. Eno-Nku Manasseh, presented a long-term integrated framework built around the SAFE approach that would inform the development of a long-term human-elephant mitigation strategy for the Mount Cameroon National Park and its peripheral zones.

The approach, holistic in nature, he stated, requires the full participation of the communities and all other stakeholders.

It is different from previous approaches used in that it takes into consideration the six human-wildlife conflict management elements: policy, prevention, mitigation, understanding the conflict, response, and monitoring.

The Mount Cameroon National Park is home to the forest elephant and many other wildlife species. To facilitate its management, the park has been divided into 6 clusters (West Coast, Bomboko 1 & 2, Buea 1 & 2, and Muyuka). However, the West Coast and Bomboko 1 clusters are the most affected by the human-elephant conflict.



“Human Elephant Conflict has always been a big challenge but then, the communities in the West Coast area show a lot of interest in conservation. I am personally so happy with the collaboration and support they are giving to the park service in managing this conflict. I encourage them to continue with this positive attitude. We will all find a way to keep them and the elephants safe because the forest and the elephants are their pride” **Mr. Memvi Abessolo Charles Innocent, Conservator, Mount Cameroon National Park.**

In his closing remarks, the Mayor of the Idenau council expressed his appreciation to MINFOF and her partners for always putting the communities at the centre of discussions on issues related to the park, and for pushing for a lasting solution to the conflict that has become a menace to his municipality.

“I still reiterate that this elephant conflict has a traditional aspect that has to be looked into critically by the traditional rulers of this area. We appreciate the efforts put in place by MINFOF and her partners but we should also bear in mind that, the tradition of the people will play a vital role as we seek solutions to this conflict. We are ready to support the consultant, the park management and all partners in the struggle to put an end to this human elephant conflict“ Mr Tonde Lifanje the Lord Mayor, Idenau Council.

Community representatives speak



Mme Mbemglo Bronhilda

“Women and children are exposed to elephant attacks daily. Children encounter elephants when playing within the community or on their way to school while women encounter elephants in their farms.

Our lives depend solely on our farms but because of the elephants, we no longer get any harvest. We appreciate the efforts of the park service.

They have been supporting us in a number of ways: by building chili fences and installing bee hives along elephant gateways to the communities in order to scare the elephants, but also with food crop seeds during planting seasons. We will continue to support the park service to put an end to this conflict with elephants”. Mme Mbemglo Bronhilda, Vice president, VFMC, Njonji village



Mr Ayeah Romanus

“We started noticing elephant damages within the Debuncha palm estate since 2015. They eat up the leaves of one-year-old palms, smash and uproot palms that are between 9 and 20 years old.

Most of our workers have abandoned their plantation work because of frequent elephant attacks. Some of them who have plots, where they cultivate food crops within the plantation, have also abandoned their farms.

The measures to scare elephants proposed by MINFOF have not been effective because our estate is vast. This new approach by the consultant is reassuring and we pledge our support to it”. Mr Ayeah Romanus, Estate Manager, CDC Debuncha Palms Estate.



WWF in Africa: Engaging with Youth Across Africa to Drive Transformational Change



Participants were enthusiastic as they look forward to phase 2 of the project

WWF is working in Africa to promote conservation and to also ensure the continent's natural resources are sustainably managed to bring about positive ecological and socio-economic transformation for the people of Africa.

In order to achieve this, WWF in Africa developed a series of transformational projects to help fast track its commitment.

WWF has also realized that it is imperative to mobilize and engage with the largest segment of its population, the youth who comprise of 70 per cent of the world's population.

The WWF Leading the Change Program, had much to show during an end of project meeting held in Douala, Cameroon, from September 5 to 7, 2022.

One million people have been reached through advocacy on social media platforms, over 500 civil society youth – led organizations directly influenced and have built the capacity of over 40,000 youth in school and their teachers.

The meeting was a moment to evaluate and celebrate, share achievements and lessons learnt in the last 5 years of the current 2018-2022 Leading the Change project phase.

It also sought to build a better, stronger and more strategic next phase, with clear actions in the bridging phase.

Besides mobilizing and training youths, the program has ensured the mainstreaming of gender and human rights based approach thus enabling the participation of both young men and women, working with indigenous communities to understand the role of indigenous knowledge in conservation.



Opening the workshop attended by 27 participants, Dr. Peter Mbile, Senior Field Programs Coordinator for WWF Cameroon, commended the youth networks for their efforts in promoting green entrepreneurship in communities through thematic approaches.



Dr Mbile

“I encourage you all young leaders to seek nature-based solutions to address environmental challenges, such as deforestation, climate change and loss of biodiversity that we face today, and also to continue to build strong partnerships with other actors towards achieving your goals,” Dr. Peter Mbile, Senior Field Programs Coordinator for WWF Cameroon

The participants included leaders of Youth Network Organizations, representatives of Partner Organizations working with Youth, WWF colleagues and youth focal points from WWF offices in Africa, the Senior Adviser and Programme Coordinator of Education for Sustainable Development at WWF Sweden, Ms. Susie Broquist Lundegard, and the Regional Coordinator of Education for Sustainable Development Program, Ms. Zipporah Musyoki – Webola.

For two days, the Pan African youth networks and WWF youth focal points discussed key results achieved and lessons learnt during the current phase of LtC1, guided by the Project Outcomes.

Other discussion sessions centered on strengthening project Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (PMEL) among partners, reviewing progress in the Africa Youth Transformational Leadership Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) and exploring strategies to empower more young leaders to take interest in conservation and pursue the course.

Furthermore, there were discussions on advocacy strategies and roadmaps toward the CBD CoP 15.2 and the UNFCCC CoP 27; refining the Theory of Change, updating work plans and activities for the LtC2 bridging phase which runs from January – June 2023.

Participants also reviewed the financial management of the project with partners and address any challenges, discussed a practical illustrative conservation model, expose the similarities and differences between LtC1 and LtC2.

Updates on financial reports – the status, gaps and end of year reporting and audit requirements were presented. It was also an opportunity to discuss future collaboration between the youth in Africa and those in Sweden.



Discussion sessions

Over the years, WWF Cameroon, in collaboration with WWF Sweden, has been coordinating youth engagement in Africa under the Sida Leading the Change Civil Society Programme through the Africa Youth Thematic Hub component.

This phase that ran from 2018 to 2022, was financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and work with Pan African Youth Networks with presence in over 34 countries in Africa, that are part of the Leading the Change Programme.

Its implementation is guided by the four pillars of the Africa Youth Transformational Leadership Programme, which include advancing policy, capacity building, green/sustainable entrepreneurship and networking platforms.

The regional component has engaged with Pan African Youth Networks to strengthen and build their capacity to enable them to contribute more meaningfully to the sustainable development agenda and towards having a strengthened civil society.



David Munene, CYNESA, Kenya



Annette Lutah, JVE, Togo



Patrick Maloum, ANYL4PSD, Cameroon



Marie Karengane, WWF DRC



Field Trip - Ocean and Mountain View



There was an opportunity for practical learning and exchange of experiences through a field visit. It was a bus drive trip from Douala in the Littoral Region to the coastal town of Limbe in the South West Region of Cameroon.

The trip offered an opportunity to hike the 1999 lava flow site and experience what the site has become 23 years after.



The field trip ended at the recreation and fishing community site of the Limbe Down Beach where WWF Cameroon, in March 2022, carried out an awareness-raising campaign on plastics and their hazards on human and aquatic life. It was an opportunity for the team to understand the challenges faced with managing plastic pollution and to discuss strategies to help salvage the situation.

At Bakingili village, the terminal of the lava flow, the site presents a scenic view of the black beaches, the city of Limbe and neighboring Equatorial Guinea across the Atlantic Ocean, at a front view, and the forested slopes of Mount Cameroon, at a back view.



WWF-CFP news reels...



The coastal forests youth champions network and some other youth drawn from communities adjacent to the proposed Mount Kupe Integral Ecological Reserve, proposed Mount Muanenguba Herpetological Sanctuary and Bakossi National Park are ongoing a week-long capacity building programme.

The topics include: Effective communication, communicating for effective conservation, youth championship and transformation leadership, working with conflict, human rights-based approach and gender mainstreaming, green entrepreneurship and simple business planning, and the benefits and rights of youths in green entrepreneurship.



Mount Kupe



Mount Muanenguba

After an official appointment of Conservators of Protected Areas in Cameroon, Mr. Siroma Jean has been appointed as the Conservator of the Bakossi National Park, while the Mount Cameroon National Park welcomes Mr. Ebog Hector Sylvain



Bakossi National Park



Mt Cameroon National Park

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