

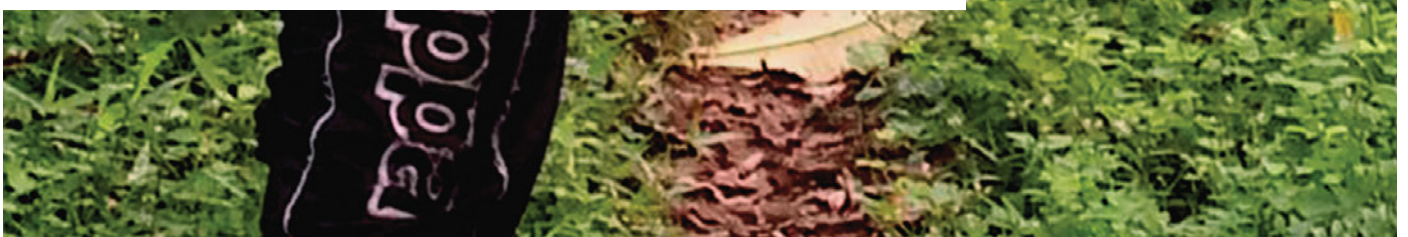


WWF
CAMEROON



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ANNUAL REPORT 2022



ABOUT WWF CAMEROON

Our Vision

Healthy ecosystems and thriving biodiversity
supporting people and driving green growth

The WWF Cameroon Country Program Office (CCPO), henceforth referred to as WWF-Cameroon in this report, started in 1990 as a small office with one field project (Korup Project). Thirty-three years after, WWF has grown in scope and vision.

Scope
WWF supports the Government of Cameroon in the implementation of the medium term development strategy, the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper, thereby contributing to progress towards the country’s 2035 vision of becoming a middle-income country. WWF offers support in mainstreaming environmental sustainability in sectoral policies, strategies and programs, and supports implementation of the Forest and Environment Program. We operate from 11 field offices in five landscapes and a national office in Yaoundé.

- Main Strategic Pillars**
- Sustainable Wildlife Management
 - Sustainable Forest Management
 - Food and Agriculture
 - Climate and Energy

Drivers
Governance, Finance and Human wellbeing

Four major field programmes

Jengi TNS Program (Lobeke)
This program provides technical assistance for the management of Lobeke National Park, which is the Cameroon segment of Sangha Tri-national landscape (TNS), a UNESCO World Heritage site and its surrounding zones.

Jengi TRIDOM Programme
This program focuses on the management of Nki and Boumba-Bek national parks and the Ngoyla and Dja wildlife reserves, Mengame Gorilla Sanctuary and their surrounding multiple used zones.

Coastal Forests Programme
With head office in Limbe, Southwest Region of Cameroon, the program provides technical and administrative support to the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife at the regional level and in Bakossi, Korup and Mount Cameroon national parks and the Banyang Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary. The Program also promotes promising models of sustainable natural resource management to influence policies through effective civil society, youth and indigenous people actions.

Kudu Zombo Programme
This program supports the management of Campo Ma’an National Park and focuses on the development of a gorilla habituation project in the perspective of promoting eco-tourism.

- WWF Cameroon in few dates**
- 1990: Opening of office in Douala with a field project
 - 1992: Co-operation Agreement signed with the Government of Cameroon
 - 1994: Bilateral Agreement signed with WWF Netherlands
 - 2002: Regional Office for Central Africa (CARPO) is moved to Cameroon
 - 2004: Government of Cameroon signed agreement to host the WWF Central African Regional Programme Office
 - 2006: Partnership agreement signed with Ministry of Forests and Wildlife
 - 2015: Convention signed with Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development
 - 2019: Convention signed with Cameroon’s Ministry of Social Affairs.

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LET'S RAMP UP ACTION TO RESTORE NATURE AND SAVE HUMANITY

The year 2022 was a seismic one for nature. The WWF Living Planet Report released in October 2022, showed wildlife population have declined by 69% since 1971. A very disturbing situation especially as the world continues to witness rising temperatures caused by a changing climate. Sea levels are rising, hundreds of people have died, thousands rendered homeless and tens of thousands more are on the verge of starvation due to floods, drought and conflicts. These have caused a sense of urgency for actors and stakeholders seeking solutions to two of humanity's biggest challenges: climate change and biodiversity loss.

In Egypt, world leaders met but failed to make strong concessions on reaching climate change goals. Rays of hope, however, beamed from Montreal, Canada during the conference of Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD COP15), where some 195 countries on December 19, 2022, agreed to protect 30% of the planet by 2030, restore 30% of damaged ecosystems and double resources for protecting nature.

It is against this backdrop that WWF coalesced with other partners to find solutions that work for people and nature in 2022. WWF-Cameroon, the Ministry of Forest and Wildlife (MINFOF) and local communities and indigenous people ramped up Gorilla Habituation and One-Health protocols in Campo Ma'an National Park in the South Region of Cameroon. The project that began over a decade ago has made remarkable progress with a group of lowland gorillas ("AKIBA") now almost fully accepting human presence. The habituation project is expected to boost ecotourism and generate income for both local communities, the private sector and the government while shoring up the protection of gorillas and other wildlife and ensuring zoonosis are mastered.

Conscious of the negative impacts that human activities can have on nature, WWF and the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) concluded a study that identified sectors eroding biodiversity more than others, in Cameroon. Conducted within the framework of BIODEV 2030 project, the study revealed that agriculture (rural production and agro-industry) and infrastructure development are the two sectors with the most impact on nature. WWF is encouraging the government to use this knowledge to engage with the private sector in voluntary partnership to protect nature in all of their operations.

Sustainable agriculture

More sobering is our determination to engage with actors of the agricultural sector with strong impact on healthy forests. Hundreds of farmers have been engaged in cocoa production in the South and East Regions of Cameroon. This is part of the WWF Green Cocoa Landscape Program (GCLP) project which seeks to incentivize, train and support farmers to implement best practices with less negative impact on biodiversity. WWF Cameroon collaborates with large scale cocoa buyers in the country to achieve deforestation-free cocoa value chains.

There are glimmers of hope in Boumba-Bek and Nki national parks in the Cameroon segment of the TRIDOM landscape. A system of **permanent presence** of conservation staff and members of local communities and indigenous people carrying out biomonitoring of wildlife in some clearings inside the parks has reduced poaching and generated income for local communities. This is a flagship system that WWF intends to standardize as a product and replicate in other supported landscapes in the country.



Clotilde Ngomba: WWF-Cameroon Country Director

Respect for human rights

WWF continued to provide unalloyed support to the consultation process for the renewal of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Ministry of Forest and Wildlife (MINFOF) and indigenous Baka people represented by their association called ASBABUK in 2019. The MoU expired in 2022 and a vast consultation of Baka in 88 villages, conducted by nine NGOs and two international partners; including evaluation of lessons learned from previous MoU has been completed with the goal of strengthening subsequent relationships. WWF expects a more inclusive MoU to be signed by the two actors in 2023.

In strict compliance with its Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (ESSF) WWF continued to support the mainstreaming of Human Rights in all its activities. In collaboration with the Cameroon Bar Association and the National Human Rights Commission, WWF trained over 150 rangers on Human Rights in anti-poaching operations. Meanwhile a Complaint Mechanism put in place to both give and strengthen aggrieved voices of IPLCs in particular, and managed by local Civil Society Organizations is functioning well, with zero cases of human rights abuses recorded against rangers till end 2022.

WWF is leading innovations in the valorization of indigenous and local community management systems; such as by-laws in community-assisted patrols – COVAREFs; use of indigenous spatial and technical knowledge, such as ExCiTeS/Sapelli, in the Rights Based management of natural resources; are in full display in the Lobeke National Park and its environs; and will be further strengthened.

Leveraging landscape restoration

The Forest landscape restoration fever has also gripped Cameroon. The government, which is a signatory to the Bonn Challenge and AFR100 pledges to restore more than 12 million hectares of degraded landscape by 2030. Most of the focus will be in the three northern regions of Cameroon. In this vein, WWF completed a sub-national restoration opportunities assessment methodology (ROAM) on the peripheries of Benoue and Faro National Parks in the North of Cameroon. The preliminary findings which show some 30,000 of mostly degraded agriculture soils, river banks and community forests are on display on the communications and fundraising digital platform www.moneytrees.cm. Other WWF-led restoration interventions, such as 32 ha of Community and Communal forests in the Eastern region, will soon be centralized on the platform. WWF is engaged to bring over 3000,000 ha of degraded landscapes under restoration through the digital platform in at least five supported landscapes.

Based on the SAFE Systems Approach, WWF begun engaging with local level Stakeholders in the West Coast of the Mount Cameroon National to manage Human Elephant Conflicts and to promote greater Co-existence between beasts and people in the South West Coast of Cameroon. Although a decades old problem, WWF aims to put a more permanent system in place; built on local and expert knowledge of Elephants, the terrain and early warning and education systems to promote durable notions of Human Wildlife Co-existence in the long-term.

Perspective

In the face of numerous engagements, WWF will pursue efforts to restore nature, mainstream the respect of Human Rights and intensify actions for sustainable agriculture. We shall be keen on ensuring that habituated gorillas in Campo receive the right protection, making them optimally available for viewing tourism, while securing the health of staff and people working in the area.

Through the GEF 7 impact project WWF shall promote ecotourism, support non timber forest product value chain development and leverage opportunities presented by other projects with limited resources.

Reconciling economic, social and rural development and protection of nature remains our biggest challenge. WWF will work with national civil society organizations and partners to ensure that use of forest lands respect international norms and does not impact negatively on local populations, or their descendants.

Finally, we will mobilize Cameroonians to speak up for nature - our life support system, along the lines of the outcome of COP15.



SOME KEY MOMENTS AT WWF-CAMEROON

Cameroon's Minister of Forests and Fauna discusses with WWF International Director General

The Director General of WWF International, Marco Lambertini, met with Cameroon's Minister of Forests and Wildlife, Jules Doret Ndongo, on the sideline of the African Protected Areas Congress held in Kigali, Rwanda. They discussed inclusive conservation and Cameroon's commitment to integrate respect for human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples in the implementation of conservation activities. Both men confirmed their commitment to conservation through protected areas in general, and agreed to continue efforts to protect Cameroon's rich biodiversity for the well-being of people and the planet.



Jules Doret Ndongo tells Marco Lambertini: Our relationship with WWF-Cameroon is excellent

WWF Delegation meets Cameroon's Minister of Social Affairs

On January 24, 2022, a delegation from WWF-USA, Netherlands, Switzerland and WWF Office for Africa paid a courtesy visit to the Cameroon Minister of Social Affairs (MINAS). They discussed issues related to social aspects of conservation. It should be recalled that WWF-Cameroon signed and MoU with the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2019. The visiting delegation listened to briefings on the progress made in the implementation of a joint work plan between the partners and perspective for greater participation of the Social Affairs Ministry in protecting the rights of indigenous people and local communities in conservation projects.



Signing of MoU between MINEPDED, WWF GEF Agency and WWF-Cameroon



L to R: Madam Ngomba, WWF Country Director, Heike WWF-GEF Agency, Hele Pierre-Environment Minister

The Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development, (MINEPDED), the WWF GEF Agency, and WWF-Cameroon have signed an agreement and launched the implementation of the Integrated Management of Cameroon's Forest Landscapes in the Congo Basin project (GEF-7). The GEF-7 project aims to strengthen the integrated management of Cameroon's globally important forest landscapes in the Congo Basin in order to secure its biological integrity and increase the economic opportunities and livelihoods of forest-dependent people. It is planned for a period of six years. The project will be implemented in Campo Ma'an-Rio Campo (CMRC), the Tri-National Dja-Odzala-Minkebe (TRIDOM), the Tri-National de la Sangha (TNS), an inter-zone between Rio Campo and the TRIDOM landscape of Cameroon.

Director General of WWF France, Conservation Director WWF Netherlands visit TRIDOM Landscape

In order to better understand the opportunities and challenges linked to WWF work in the TRIDOM landscape (spanning Cameroon, Gabon and the Republic of Congo), a field visit of WWF network members took place in April in TRIDOM Cameroon and ETIC Congo areas. The team comprised the Director General of WWF France, Veronique Andrieux, and the Conservation Director of WWF Netherlands, Deon Nel, accompanied by the TRIDOM Landscape Leader, Jaap van der Waarde, amongst others. The visitors held meetings with Bantu and Baka people in Ndongo and Ba'aka villages and field staff to better appreciate the environment and the communities' expectations.



Veronique Andrieux, Director General of WWF France, at the Nki falls, East Cameroon



A handshake with Deon Nel Conservation Director of WWF Netherlands

WWF Sweden Civil Society Programme Manager visits Coastal Forests Programme



Linda Gamble communes with Mbororo indigenous people

Lina Gamble, Programme Manager Civil Society at WWF Sweden, visited the WWF Cameroon Coastal Forests Programme from October 2 to 8, 2022. Her visit was part of routine monitoring of implementation of the Leading the Change Programme (LtC), aimed at seeking clarity on the development of the LtC2 proposal and to understand how LtC fits within WWF-Cameroon's strategic plan. Some key highlights include: Having a broad understanding working with partners on Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities rights in relation to Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) and the Environmental and Social Safeguard Framework (ESSF) process. She held face-to-face discussions with the Mbororo indigenous people groups, civil society organizations including CAD, CEFAID and GDA, to understand the partnership process with CSOs – the selection process, granting and long-term plan to build capacity.

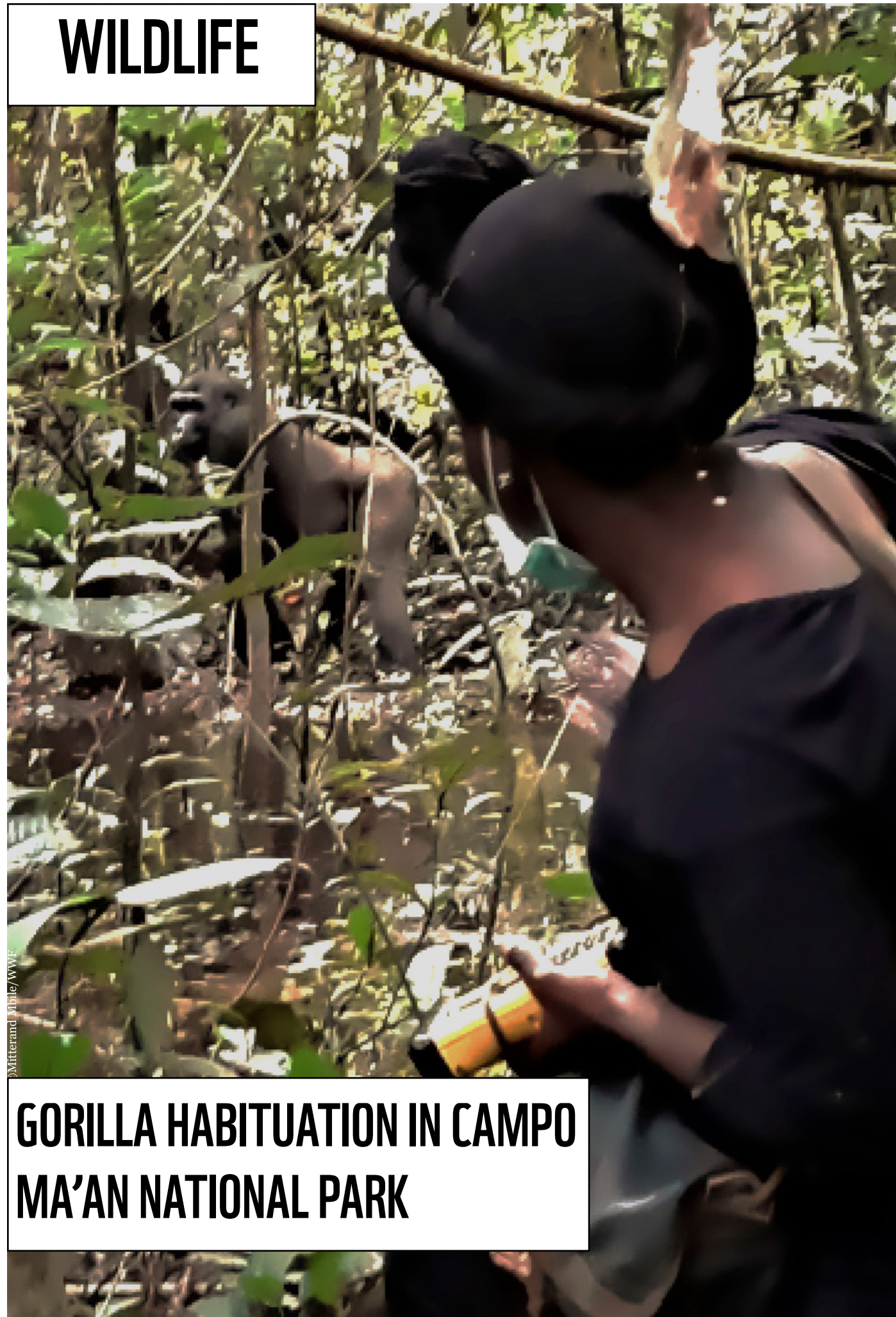
Stepping into a cocoa farm

During a visit to a cocoa farm in Mintom, South Region of Cameroon, the then WWF Netherlands CEO, Kirsten Schuijt and other senior members of the WWF network listened to farmers belonging to a cooperative restructured by WWF and partners. WWF is promoting green cocoa production by incentivizing and training local farmers to produce more without cutting down virgin forest to extend their farms. Under the WWF Green Cocoa Landscape Program, farmers of a cocoa cooperative of over 120 members are trained on low impact cultivation methods, natural farm treatment methods, pest control using bio-products and construction of traditional dryers, while reducing destruction of the forest.



Farmer (machete in hand) explains sustainable cocoa production to visiting WWF team

WILDLIFE



GORILLA HABITUATION IN CAMPO MA'AN NATIONAL PARK

GORILLAS AND PEOPLE SHAKE HANDS IN CAMPO MA'AN NATIONAL PARK

A group of lowland gorillas has been successfully habituated inside Campo Ma'an National Park in the South Region of Cameroon thanks to a joint partnership involving WWF, the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, local community and indigenous people.

Gorilla habituation is the process of "taming" a group of extremely wild gorillas and getting them to be less aggressive to human presence in their natural environment in the wild. This method aims to improve the protection of these great apes and to create suitable conditions for a successful gorilla-viewing tourism.

Standing several meters away from them, a group of gorillas appeared receptive, oblivious of the very close human presence. As France Anougue, WWF health monitoring assistant for Campo Ma'an and her team of trackers stooped to catch a glimpse of them, the dominant male peered through the thickets and gazed at them.

"I watched a female gorilla waddled from behind and stood beside the male steering at us," Anougue says. After five minutes of steering, the gorillas started foraging for food, pulling off shrubs and guiding leaves into their mouths. They ate and frolic, then waddled away 20 minutes after.

According to the gorilla habituation team, this behavior betokens outstanding progress in the habituation process. "After 7 years of data collection, results show that the target gorilla group under habituation known as "Akiba" now accepts human presence," says Marius Sombambo, WWF Kudu-Zombo project executant.

"Behavior recording indicated that in 80% of cases, gorillas manifested curiosity and ignorance as opposed to aggression. Field teams were able to take video footages and still pictures as long as 8 minutes at a distance less than 10 meters," Marius says. "These gorillas are ready to welcome tourists," he adds.

In 2011, WWF started the process for gorilla habituation in Campo Ma'an National Park. A 2020 wildlife survey result shows Campo Ma'an has a relatively stable gorilla population numbering over 337 with 54% in Dipikar Island, which is the focused site for the habituation.

As the team hiked back to their base camp, they encountered other groups of gorillas in the thickets and in the trees. "We marveled at the acrobatic display of a couple of

gorillas on the tree branches," says France.

The Campo Ma'an habituation team has been tracking a group of gorillas since 2015 when the contact phase started. The remarkable success registered so far, has enhanced hope for gorilla observation tourism, first of its kind in Cameroon. The habituation project is expected to boost ecotourism in order to generate sorely needed income for the communities and the State of Cameroon.

However, for the project to succeed more effort is needed to protect the home range of the gorilla, put in place a functional gorilla-human health component, sustainable funding and an appropriate government policy framework (public-private partnership) for the management of the gorilla observation ecotourism program.

Fidelis Manga

WWF-Cameroon Communications Coordinator



Now leave us, it is lunch time

CONNECTING HUMAN, ANIMAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

WWF has established a well equipped wildlife lab in Campo that serves as an on-site disease outbreak early warning tool and potential field site training and research facility. This is the first time a wild lab has been integrated in the management plan of a national park in Cameroon.

A health expert, health-monitoring assistant and trained gorilla trackers spend long periods in the jungle to monitor the health of gorillas and other wildlife species. The team uses non-invasive methods, which include acoustic sounds produced by gorillas (coughing, sneezing, farthing, pains, copulation, stomach rumbling...). Data of animal physical appearances including specimens such as feces, phlegm, urine, hairs, food leftover are regularly collected and analyzed.

Wildlife carcasses found in the forest are occasionally examined (necropsy) and specimens collected. The specimens are screened for pathogens such as Ebola, Monkeypox, Coronaviruses, Anthrax etc., in the disease diagnostic wildlife laboratory (wild lab).

The effort to proactively check for pathogens is based on the fact that forest conservation is intrinsically linked to biodiversity and pandemic prevention. “Intact and healthy ecosystems are essential for biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration and resilience to climate change and anthropogenic stress, while providing natural resource and ecosystem services that are essen-

Outcome of monitoring zoonotic pathogens in gorilla habituation workers and habituated gorillas - Campo Ma'an National Park - December 2018 and December 2022

tial for the livelihoods of indigenous people and local communities (IPLCs),” says Dr. Michael Kuwong, WWF Wildlife Veterinary Officer for Campo Ma’an.

There are concerns that the Campo Ma’an landscape might be a potential hotspot for disease spillover because of several human activities within the landscape that extend deeper and deeper into wildlife habitats. Campo Ma’an is surrounded by five logging concessions and multiple used zones where community agro-forestry and agro-industrial activities (oil palm and rubber plantations) are ongoing.

WWF’s disease mitigation plan for Campo Ma’an involves integrated biosecurity and biosafety protocols, systematic monitoring of the health of park staff and wildlife in the park, vaccination of eco-guardians, trackers and their nuclear family against zoonoses such as yellow fever, hepatitis B, Polio-myelitis, TB, rabies, etc. This is called the “One Health” approach to mitigate disease spillover (zoonosis).

The Wildlab works closely with the Cameroon National Zoonosis Program, WWF laboratory in Dzanga Sangha in Central African Republic and Robert Koch Institute in Berlin, Germany.

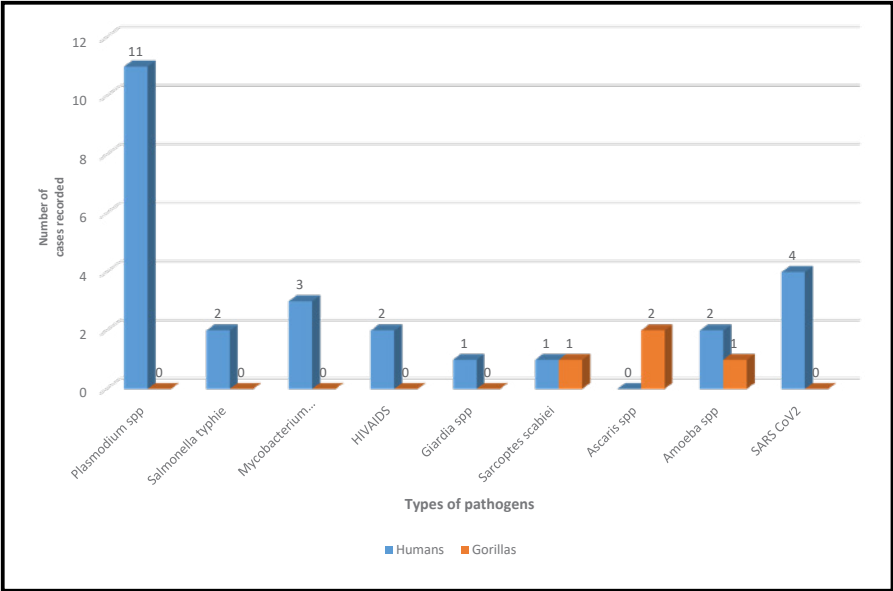


Table shows number of pathogens recorded between December 2018 to December 2022

Specimens are screened for pathogens such as Ebola, Monkeypox, Coronaviruses, Anthrax etc., in the Campo Wildlife Lab



Collection of specimens inside Campo Ma'an National Park



Dr. Michael Kuwong, WWF veterinary officer: analyzing specimen in wildlab

INNOVATIVE WILDLIFE MONITORING SYSTEM DETERRING POACHERS AND CREATING JOBS

Poaching has become almost non-existent in the forest clearings of Ikwah (Nki National Park) and Pondo (Boumba Bek National Park) thanks to the innovative **Permanent Presence** biomonitoring system established in 2017 by the WWF Cameroon Jengi Program.

The program, which monitors wildlife dynamics in the two clearings, has closely collaborated with indigenous people and local communities (IPLCs) in South-East Cameroon to put an end to illegal human activities that caused a drop in the number of wild-life species within these two biodiversity hotspots. Since the program’s inception, the frequency of wild-life species has increased by 50% in Pondo, doubled in Ikwah, and generated income for the Baka and Bantu communities in less than five years.

The Permanent Presence Biomonitoring System

The concept works on the premise that the constant presence of a team in a specific location deters poachers. The specific location can be a high biodiversity spot, which in this case are the two forest clearings of Ikwah (Nki NP) and Pondo (Boumba Bek NP), which are popular gathering points for wildlife and thus poaching hotspots. The Permanent Presence was to be in place for thirty days a month, with teams of IPLCs, eco-guardians, and WWF staff covering a five-kilometer radius in both clearings. The teams would then rotate every two weeks and avoid gaps between them.

The program which started in 2017, initially faced difficulties because of limited resources, such as vehicles, a limited number of camping kits, and the availability of IPLC representatives and as a result, the presence in the clearings was in place for just half of the year. However,

this served as a learning period for the WWF Jengi Cameroon team and enabled the team to take these learnings and keep fine tuning the program. This has seen the Permanent Presence gradually increase over the years, and in 2021 the presence was in place for 25–30 days per month in the two clearings.

Impact

Data from the Permanent Presence biomonitoring system, analysis from direct observations, and imagery from camera traps shows that there has been a significant decrease in poaching and a gradual increase in the frequency of wildlife visits to both clearings during the day. Between 2017 and 2021, the number of wildlife visits in Ikwah increased from 9,842 to 18,802, while in Pondo, the number of visits increased from 8,562 to 10, 402 reflecting a sense of safety from the elephants.

Poaching and other illegal human activities have significantly declined between 2017 and 2021, with the number of poaching cases reducing from eighteen to zero. Presently, there are no signs of illegal human activities in or around the clearings.

In addition, the program has contributed to the livelihoods and general well-being of the Baka and Bantu communities, as it provides a stable income that keeps them away from poaching. The average monthly salary is about US\$150 for two weeks of monitoring in the forest



See, see, they are coming

more than the village nurse or teacher earns.

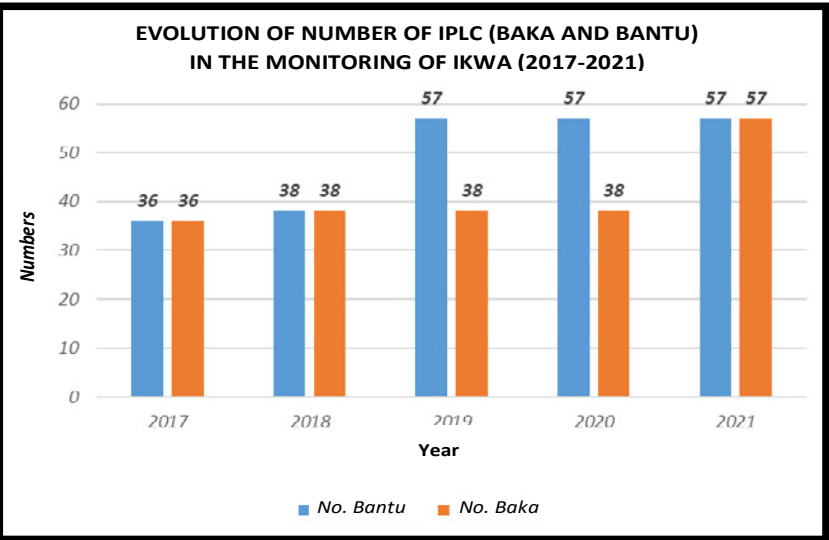
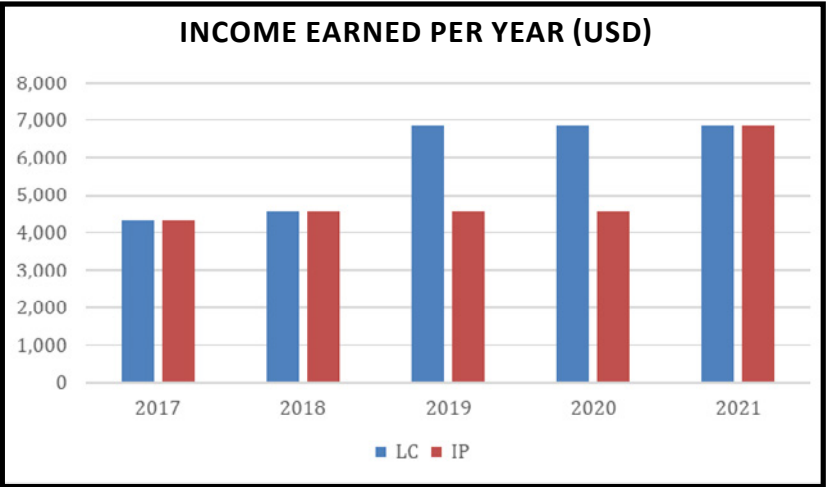
This has encouraged IPLC participation in the biomonitoring program in both clearings, with 50-50 participation from the two communities. When the system kicked off in 2017 in Ikwah, there were 36 members from each community taking part in the program. By the end of 2021, the program had 57 active members from each

community. Similarly, in Pondo, there were 28 members from each community engaged in the program in 2017, and this increased to 60 in 2021.

By Gilles Etoga
Senior Policy and Conservation Coordinator,
WWF-Cameroon



Bantu and Baka Biomonitoring assistants setting camera trap, Nki National Park, East Region of Cameroon





HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT: HOW TO MAKE IT 'SAFE'

From the Southwest to the South and East Regions of Cameroon, a conflict is raging between elephants and people. Elephants encroach on farms, trample on crops and threaten the lives and livelihoods of local people. In Bakingili, Njonji and Bomana communities around Mount Cameroon National Park in the Southwest Region of Cameroon, victims sometimes lose up to 70 % of their crops to elephant activities. In Campo, in the South of Cameroon, the clearing down of over 2400 hectares of forest to set up a palm oil plantation has increased the incidence of human-elephant conflict, going by complaints from local people.

Cases are rife of elephants destroying farms around Nki, Boumba Bek and Lobéké national parks in the East of Cameroon.

A number of factors are influencing and worsening the conflict. They include, extensive farm expansion, destruction of traditional elephant habitats, encroachment into elephant habitats and corridors, limited water sources, extended dry season, degradation and reduction of tree density, cultivation of elephants preferred food at the vicinity of parks, poaching and use of fire-arms in elephant ranges amongst others.

It is against this backdrop that WWF Cameroon has begun implementing the SAFE system approach around the Mount Cameroon National Park in collaboration with the Program for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources for the South West Region (PSMNR-SWR).

Driven by the community, the SAFE system approach prioritizes good understanding of the prevailing human wildlife conflict,

mechanisms to stop or prevent conflicts from occurring, a robust response measures to alleviate and or mitigate the impact of the conflicts and the establishment of policies and principles to guide the interventions. Furthermore, the system enables monitoring and evaluation of performance and effectiveness of human wildlife conflict management interventions.

It is believed if properly implemented, the SAFE approach will establish coexistence between humans and elephants. This will however require sustained tolerance, meaningful and inclusive participation of stakeholders and alignment to broader development goals that contribute to people's wellbeing, health and safety.

Testimonies of some of the victims lend credence to the latter principle. "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," said Elive Joseph Mokunya, Chief of Bakingili village. "Children are scared from going to school because the elephants usually invade the school campuses," he said.

The Regional Delegate for Forestry and Wildlife for the Southwest, Mme Ikome Delphine, said, "human elephant conflict concerns everyone. All stakeholders must participate in managing this conflict," she added.

Janet Mukoko
*Digital Communications Officer,
WWF-Cameroon*

VAST CONSULTATION OF BAKA AHEAD OF RENEWAL OF AGREEMENT WITH WILDLIFE MINISTRY

Indigenous Baka people in the East Region of Cameroon have been consulted on the renewal of a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) they signed with Cameroon's Ministry of Forest and Wildlife (MINFOF). The MoU that was signed in February 2019 defined the framework regulating access to resources areas within Lobeke, Boumba Bek and part of Nki National Parks by the Baka in the East Region of Cameroon.

An evaluation of the implementation of the Accord, conducted by a team comprising MINFOF personnel and representatives of some civil society organisations, showed that while the MoU permitted the Baka to gain access to the forest, they still faced several challenges from fully enjoying their access rights. Absence of a monitoring committee to follow up implementation of the MoU's action plan, lack of financial and human resources capacity of ASBABUK (the Baka Association representing the Baka), to conduct sensitization in the entire area, and conflict with sport hunting hunters, are some of the problems that plagued the implementation of the MoU.

In a bid to collect the views of Baka and produce a much improved MoU that will meet their hopes and aspirations, some 2000 Baka spread across 88 communities around the Lobeke, Nki and Boumba Bek National Parks and the Ngoyla Wildlife Reserve were consulted in June 2022. Local and national NGOs that make up the consortium of civil society organisations working to promote the rights of Baka, RACOPY (Réseau Action Concerté Pygmé comprising Okani, AAFEBEN, Fusion Nature, CADDAP, CEFAID, PERAD, ASTRADHE and ASBABAK), carried out the consultation with the support of WWF and GIZ.

Views of Baka collected during the consultation revealed that in spite having obtained free access to protected areas through the MoU, lack of collaboration by sports hunters, awareness of the MoU and remoteness to the parks contributed to deny many Baka access to protected areas.

For Yaya Marcel, Baka man of Mambele village, "the MoU has been very beneficial for Baka. We went into the park and carried out our activities as before without any problems. However, many Baka were afraid to go to the conservation service to request authorisation to go to the park."

"The MoU enabled us to freely move into the forest and carry out our activities as in the time of our parents. That

is what is important for the Baka in the paper we signed with Government," says Gabale Beatrice, Baka woman of Long Trait community situated on the fringes of Lobeke National Park.

Role of stakeholders

Following the consultation, key partners including RACOPY and FPP (Forest People Programme) with the support of WWF and GIZ are working together to propose a draft revised document to be submitted to MINFOF for review and validation. The expected outcome is a new MoU that reflects Baka communities' aspirations for access to resources in national parks, clarifies the responsibilities of both parties (the communities and MINFOF), ensures greater representativeness of ASBABUK in all the areas covered by the MoU, and establish a mechanism to evaluate their commitments.

This will entail listening to the indigenous Baka on how they wish to collaborate with the conservation services (conservators and eco-guards among others) and the various actors involved in the management of protected areas and their peripheral zones (community hunting and sport hunting zones, forest concessions, community forests, etc.).

"From the series of meetings held around the Lobeke and Nki National Parks that were assigned to us, by using participatory approaches with simple illustrative tools where communities participate democratically, we were able to learn many lessons," states Venant Messe, Coordinator of OKANI.

"For the communities, crucial problems linked to this MoU are human-wildlife conflicts, the restructuring of the body (ASBABUK) implementing the MoU and financing. How to finance the implementation of the MoU is a challenge to be met so that the Baka Association (ASBABUK), CSOs, international organisations and even the government can effectively accompany this process," Messe says.

For WWF, one of the main partners that is supporting the MoU revision process, "working with all partners as well as key actors around protected areas will produce a more inclusive document, ensure effective implementation and guarantee greater access to natural resources for the Baka," states Moise Kono, WWF Cameroon IP Coordinator.

Ernest Sumelong
WWF-Jengi Communications Officer



Baka woman expressing her views during one of the consultation meetings



Baka man explains their activities in the forest



Sensitization of Baka around Lobeke National Park, East Cameroon

EMBEDDING HUMAN RIGHTS CULTURE AROUND PROTECTED AREAS

Four elements are contributing to implanting a human rights culture around protected areas in the southeast of Cameroon; Nki and Boumba Bek National Parks, the Ngoyla Wildlife Reserve and particularly Lobeke National Park (a world heritage site in the Tri-national de la Sangha (TNS) landscape). They include the introduction and implementation of a Community Complaints Mechanism, creation of a Human Rights Centre near Lobeke and regular training of government rangers and other law enforcement agents on human rights and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in February 2019 between the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) and Baka granting them access rights into the protected areas.

The creation of protected areas and enforcement of the wildlife law have, in the past, engendered conflicts between government rangers and local people, particularly the Baka who depend wholly on the forest for their livelihood.

The Community Complaints Mechanism and the Human Rights Centre are part of the programme “human rights due diligence in the Congo Basin”, financed by the German Ministry of Development Cooperation (BMZ) and WWF. It focuses on promoting and strengthening human rights for indigenous people and local communities (IP & LC) around three WWF priority landscapes in the Congo Basin. These landscapes include the Dzanga-Sangha Protected Areas in the Central African Republic (DSPA), the Lobéké National Park in Cameroon (LNP) and the Salonga National Park (SNP) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The programme is imple-

mented in collaboration with several local civil society partners. In Cameroon, it is implemented by the « Centre pour l’Education, la Formation et l’Appui aux Initiatives de Développement au Cameroun » (CEFAID).

As of December 2022, the Human Rights Centre in Mambele near Lobeke National Park had recorded some 500 complaints of alleged cases of rights abuses since its creation in October 2019, according to Victor Amougou, Coordinator of CEFAID. The Community Complaint Mechanism ensures follow-up of complaints and support to victims of injustices.

MoU between Baka and MINFOF

The signing of the MoU between the Baka and MINFOF in 2019, has contributed to promoting the rights of the Baka to access natural resources in parks. Yaya Marcel, Baka man of Mambele village, says, thanks to the MoU, Baka families have access to the park and have been undertaking their activities freely. “We have been carrying out our activities in the forest without confrontation with eco-guards,” Yaya stated.

As part of its efforts to ensure that the work of rangers does not contribute to rights abuses, WWF has been supporting the training of eco-guards on human rights, since 2015. At first, only rangers participated in these training sessions. Recent trainings have involved the military, police, sports hunters, IP and Local Community members, thereby providing opportunities for dialogue among the different local actors.



Ecoguards brainstorming



Training of eco-guards, the military, police, sports hunters, indigenous people and local community members on human rights

Rangers Speak Up

Mpamb Marius, one of 35 eco-guards of Lobeke National Park who took the human rights training in May 2022, admits that significant changes have been observed in their work in the field. “Before, we were ignorant of issues of human rights and therefore our actions might have contributed to some of the alleged abuses. However, with the training we are receiving, our relationship with communities is more cordial than before,” Mpamb says.

For Baka eco-guard, Bodja Igor, Baka perception of eco-guards has changed positively. “At first, they were scared of us apparently due to the way anti-poaching operations were conducted. With continuous sensitization and training, we have noticed significant changes,” he explains.

A clear challenge for the Centre appears to be communities’ (mis)understanding and inability to distinguish human rights abuse cases and common problems in the communities, thereby causing ill-feeling among some community members and key actors in the landscape. During a meeting in November 2022 in Mambele between Lobeke Park Management, the TNS Foundation, KFW, WWF and CEFAID, to discuss the implementation of the Complaints Mechanism and the role of the Human Rights Centre, the different actors proposed collaboration, greater sensitization and clarity of the role of the Centre and CEFAID for better promotion of the rights of IP and Local Communities.

Ernest Sumelong
WWF-Jengi Communications Officer

The Community Complaints Mechanism and the Human Rights Centre are part of the programme “human rights due diligence in the Congo Basin”

WWF YOUTH PROGRAM MOBILISES MILLIONS, TRAINS THOUSANDS



Participants during end of phase meeting in Douala, Cameroon

The WWF Leading the Change Civil Society Program had much to show during an end of phase 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 the capacity of 40,000 youth in school and their teachers built.

The project that ran from 2018 to 2022, was financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). It is implemented in 34 countries across Africa that are part of the Leading the Change Program, in collaboration with WWF Sweden.

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. 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. The project is guided by 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 agen-

da and towards having a strengthened civil society.

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.

Opening the workshop attended by 27 participants, Dr. Peter Mbile, Senior Field Programs Coordinator for WWF Cameroon, encouraged 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 continue to build strong partnerships with other actors towards achieving your goals.”

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.

Janet Mukoko
Digital Communications Officer

SPOTLIGHT ON WWF’S EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN CAMEROON

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) component, under the Leading the Change Project, is managed by our implementing partner, the Parent Teacher Association of Ecole Publique de Nsoug, with the support and guidance of WWF Cameroon. The ultimate goal of this component is to build the action competencies of learners in targeted schools in order to ensure their demonstration of sustainable lifestyles and transfer of best practices to communities for the promotion of conservation and sustainable development.

To achieve the above, the schools have been technically and logistically supported by WWF, through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), to implement the Whole School Approach (WSA) which consists of six thematic areas: school culture and ethos, school estate, community, pupils, teaching and learning, and monitoring and evaluation.

Under school culture and ethos, the schools have stated their conservation and sustainable development visions which are supported with codes of ethics to guide and direct learners’ and teachers’ behaviours in and out of school. You can see these on large boards as you enter the schools. As for school estates, the schools have embarked on the development of green income-generating activities to promote the cultivation of life skills but also alternative learning spaces to facilitate outdoor teaching and learning to achieve efficacy.

The strong links established with the host communities have helped to promote the transfer of best practices from the target schools to their homes in their host communities, and vice versa. The WSA also promotes youth empowerment, as the learners are not only provided with good learning environments and facilities but also given the opportunity to participate in all school affairs through the student participation platform, otherwise known as student government. Under the teaching and learning themat-

ic area, the schools have not only been able to develop Locally Relevant Themes (LORETS) as local curricula that address local conservation and development challenges but also assured the capacity development of a Core team of trainers and development of ESD Model Lesson Notes and Teaching Exercises based on African learning culture.

Developed by a Core Team of trainers, with the technical guidance and facilitation of WWF, Ecole Publique de Nsoug, based in the Littoral Region of Cameroon, has printed 1000 copies of the Teaching Exercises based on African learning culture. This manual will be distributed nationwide and will facilitate teaching and learning in schools by linking learners to culture and nature and reinforcing their action competences. This is a huge contribution to pedagogy not only in Cameroon and Africa but in the world as a whole. Once printed and distributed nationwide, the ESD Model Lesson Notes manual will also greatly improve teaching in Cameroon and beyond.

A recent monitoring and evaluation exercise, conducted in December 2022, has confirmed that two other schools have joined Ecole Publique de Nsoug as model schools that are capable of influencing other schools and communities to adopt best practices and transform into exemplary centres of conservation and sustainable development.

An earlier study, conducted in 2016, had already revealed that some of the ESD schools, notably Ecole Publique de Nsoug, Lycee Bilingue de Melong and Teacher Training College Bangem, were already creating conservation impacts in some communities of the Bakossi Landscape.

Ekpe Inyang
Capacity Building Advisor/ESD & YEP Focal Point



ESD model school

AGRICULTURE & FOOD

PROMOTING ECO-FRIENDLY COCOA FARMING IN CAMEROON



It is harvest time: Cocoa farmer in Ngoyla, East Region of Cameroon



Abiam Delphine, cocoa farmer, East Region of Cameroon: Got a good harvest

Cocoa provides income for most households in the East Region of Cameroon. However, after years of cocoa farming, local farmers do not make substantial revenue from their trade. Low yields from ageing farms push farmers to clear virgin forest to set up new farms. The debts they incur for chemical pesticides and fertilizers leave them vulnerable to shrewd business people.

“Before the cocoa season starts, we are already in debt to acquire pesticides for our farms. We are often forced to give away our cocoa to pay our debts,” said Boh Pascal, a local farmer in Mboy II village, during a training supported by WWF for local cocoa farmers in Yokadouma Municipality.

To help the farmers increase their production without creating new farms, thereby protecting the forest, WWF through the Mobilizing More for Climate (MoMO4C) has been supporting training for farmers in Ngoyla and Yokadouma, in the East Region of Cameroon.

Over 200 local farmers have so far received training by a local NGO called CIFED with financial support from WWF. They were drilled on natural farm treatment methods, pest control using bio-products and construction of traditional dryers, to improve cocoa production while reducing destruction of the forest.

“This farm was not producing so well. After the training, I applied the techniques I learned; that of clearing off grass, pruning the cocoa tree and regulating shade. The result is this good production,” says Abiam Delphine, cocoa

farmer of Biwala I village, pointing to cocoa trees.

“I have noticed great improvement in my yields,” says Boh Pascal another farmer. Abiam and Boh are two of 200 farmers who received the WWF-supported training in Yokadouma and Ngoyla Municipalities. “I am optimistic that my production will triple when I consistently apply the knowledge in my farm,” Boh adds.

For some farmers, it is too early to draw conclusions. “My farm was used as an experimental farm; part of it was treated naturally while I continued with my former methods in the other. Both farms have produced well, so I cannot tell the difference now,” says Bandjona Chabrol, a farmer of Ngoyla.

Challenges

As they look forward to increase the quantity and quality of their cocoa, the farmers still face challenges including proper use of pesticides and having credible business partners to buy their cocoa at a good price. “Our biggest challenge is getting credible business partners for our cocoa,” Bandjona said.

Besides cocoa, WWF is working with local actors in TRIDOM Cameroon landscape to promote non-timber forest products value chain and sustainable community forestry.

By Ernest Sumelong
Communication Officer WWF
Jengi Programme

NEW COMMITMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL PRODUCTION IN CAMEROON

Henceforth palm oil production in Cameroon must comply to economically viable, environmentally appropriate and socially beneficial management and operations. This follows the endorsement of Cameroon's National Interpretation (NI) of the Round Table for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) principles and criteria. The RSPO board of directors endorsed Cameroon's NI on April 5, 2022 after a process that began in November 2019.

Cameroon's NI was developed by a Working Group, with representatives from the civil society, private sector, palm oil smallholder's cooperatives and environmental NGOs. Several meetings were held prior to finalizing the document. In compliance with international best practices, public consultations were held to create awareness and gather feedback and comments on the NI documents.

RSPO validation of the NI means Cameroon has committed to ensuring respect of Human Rights and that people participate in processes that affect them with shared access and benefits. Besides protecting human rights, the government must ensure that people engaged in palm oil production have equal opportunities to fulfil their potential in work and community with dignity and equality. The country also commits to protect, conserve and enhance ecosystems and the environment.

Palm oil is one of the raw materials contributing to Cameroon's economic growth. Production is mainly

intended for domestic consumption; thus, the development of the sector in Cameroon remains largely regulated within the limits of national laws with little attention paid to the sustainability of the sector. The lack of a sustainability standard can impact the country's ambition due to growing global pressure to ensure that palm oil production meets social, environmental and economic standards.

Since 2013, Cameroon has been engaged in the development of a national strategy for sustainable palm oil. Although not yet officially approved by the government, other regional commitments have been awarded such as those of the Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI) with the development of national guiding principles.

With the ambitions of the government and the desire of large industrial palm oil producers such as SOCAPALM and SAFACAM to become RSPO certified, it became imperative for Cameroon to ensure that the principles and criteria of the RSPO (the globally recognized standard for measuring the sustainability of palm oil production) are adaptable to the local context. The national interpretation enables Cameroon to contextualize this global standard to adapt it to the national context.

By Fideline Mborongong



Above: Fresh fruit bunches belonging to an agro-industrial company. Below: bunches belonging to palm oil smallholders



FOREST

WWF PUTS 33 HECTARES OF COUNCIL, COMMUNITY FORESTS UNDER REFORESTATION



Preparing the tree nursery: Together Possible



Now, let's plant a tree

WWF has supported council and community forests in Yokadouma, East Region of Cameroon, to reforest 32 hectares of degraded forest and create three tree nurseries. Some 1000 young trees were planted and managers of three communities and one council forests were provided technical equipment to create and manage a tree nursery.

The reforestation was the result of a WWF project dubbed “Support for the responsible management of council and community forests in the TRIDOM Cameroon landscape”, implemented since July 2021. The project involves six community forests and two local council managed forests covering an area of approximately 109,256 ha in Ngoyla and Yokadouma council areas in the Trinational Dja-Odzala-Minkebe (TRIDOM) Landscape.

Through the project, WWF hopes to shore up compliance with the prescriptions of management plans and the user rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. It also seeks to address low valuation of timber and non-timber forest products and the non-restoration of degraded areas in council and community forests.

During the first phase of the project, WWF trained members of the Baka and Bantu communities and technical staff of the Yokadouma Council resulting in the creation and management of three community nurseries, each containing around 1,150 forest and fruit seedlings, and the planting of 800 fruit trees on fallow land of almost 1.5 ha.

With regard to respect for the rights of indigenous and local populations, a participatory mapping exercise was carried out in the council forest and the results and recommendations made will be integrated into the annual management document of the forest. The council and its partners are expected to respect and implement the recommendations.

The second year of the project was launched on 30 August 2022 in the Ngoyla Municipality, Haut-Nyong Division of the East Region of Cameroon, in the presence of council and community forest managers, administrative authorities, representatives of Baka and Bantu community groups as well as civil society actors working in the forestry sector.

The Forest and Climate Coordinator of WWF Cameroon, Alphonse Ngniado, encouraged local actors to fully participate in the implementation of the project activities. “We will like to see everyone participate (men, women, Baka...), because in years to come the fruit and forest trees planted will help protect the environment and improve the living conditions of the people,” said Ngniado.

In the Cameroon segment of the TRIDOM Landscape, there are 10 communal forests and 100 community forests covering an area of 491,460 hectares, representing about 16% of this landscape.

Ernest Sumelong
WWF-Jengi Communications Officer

COMMUNITY FOREST SUPPORTING LIVELIHOODS

In the southeast of Cameroon, Indigenous peoples and local communities (IP&LCs) aspire to have potable water, decent housing, electricity, schools, and affordable healthcare.

Access to these needs do not often come easily. Stymied by poverty, the quest for improvement of wellbeing is pervasive. In this area, local people have found a niche to overcome the challenges through community forests. This area has 125 community forests assigned to IP&LCs, with 80 created with the support of WWF and local civil society partners.

According to the Cameroon 1994 Forestry Law, community forest is ‘that part of the non-permanent forest estate (not more than 5000 ha) that is the object of an agreement between government and a community in which communities undertake sustainable forest management for a period of 25 years renewable’. The main objective is engaging local communities in the sustainable management of the forest to support local development, and also creating incentives for local communities to conserve biodiversity.

IP&LCs sign agreements with economic operators who sustainably harvest and process wood from the forests. Money paid by the economic operators are used to finance micro-projects such as provision of potable water, electricity, improved housing in the communities. In addition, the IP&LCs harvest non-timber forest products for local subsistence and commercial purposes.

The sustainable use of community forests contributes to raising the standard of living for communities. After more than a decade of experience with community forests, communities now attest to some improvement in their living conditions. ‘With money generated from our com-

munity forest, we have replaced the thatched roofs of 27 houses with corrugated sheets; this has spared us leakages during the rainy season’, says Sylvestre Afane, Secretary General of ADENAM, the association that manages the community forest in the village of Alati in Mintom.

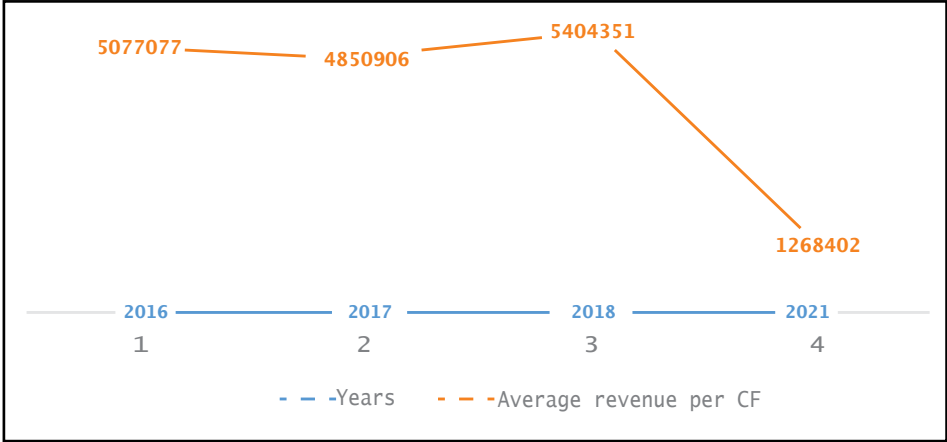
Proceeds from the exploitation of community forests are used to procure social amenities for communities. For example, in the Nzoutou village, solar panels have been acquired to provide electricity to 150 households. ‘All households in our village now enjoy constant supply of electricity’, says Ndoutoumou Jean, head of APABY, the association running the community forest. Elsewhere, revenues from community forests have been used to support the construction of boreholes to provide potable water to the communities and housing for secondary school teachers.

Meanwhile in Assok, the village of the Indigenous Baka people, community forest proceeds are used to support the education of Baka children. ‘For two years now community forest has contributed to the payment of fees for Baka children and the provision of school materials such as books, uniforms and chalks’, says Ferdinand Nyangono, head teacher of a Baka school in Assok village.

Community forests have been beset by lengthy administrative procedures, scarcity of funding, and uncertainty of technical support. Before they can exploit their forests, communities must elaborate a simple management plan, conduct inventories each year, and pay a felling tax introduced by the government in 2019. For the community forest to continue contributing to the improvement of living conditions of the people of Ngoyla-Mintom, more efforts have to be made to address these challenges.

Fidelis Manga
WWF-Cameroon Communications Coordinator

Average annual income generated by community forests in the TRIDOM Cameroon Landscape



Solar panel acquired with proceeds from community forest



In the village of Assok in Mintom, community forest also serves as Baka sacred site

WWF ASSESSES OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESTORATION OF DEGRADED LANDSCAPES IN NORTHERN CAMEROON



Degraded landscape in need of restoration



Transhumance problem still rife

WWF is supporting the Government of Cameroon in her effort to restore more than 12 million hectares of degraded landscapes in the country.

In 2017, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife committed, on behalf of the Government of Cameroon, to restore 12,062,768 ha of degraded landscapes under AFR100 and the Bonn Challenge by 2030. Of these, 80% are in the three northern regions of Adamaoua, North and Far North; with the remainder in the high plateau, Centre region, vast forest and coastal areas (Mangroves).

As part of her Africa Restoration Initiative, WWF seeks to contribute to Cameroon's efforts by bringing at least 3 million hectares of degraded forest landscapes in Cameroon under restoration by 2027. In this vein WWF recently conducted a restoration opportunities assessment on the peripheries of the Benoue and Faro national parks and their technical operational units in the North Region.

Findings show land degradation in the UTO to be characterized by very poor soils with degraded structure; bare, exposed and fragile lands; due to extensive deforestation and land denatured by erosion on river banks.

The assessment recommended three categories of restoration opportunities in the zones surveyed. These comprise through agroforestry techniques; planting a variety of tree species in combination with agricultural crops for soil fertility, fodder, fruit and wood energy; protection of stream and river banks; and reforestation and assisted natural regeneration of sacred forests, community forests and regeneration of high value species of wood.

The bulk of restoration opportunities exist in small holdings; home gardens, and community farmlands, etc., wherein soil improvers like Biochar which can be produced from agriculture, industrial and forestry waste,

presents a huge opportunity. In a recent assessment in the northern region of Cameroon, and based on a conservative restoration cost per hectare of \$US 300, an estimated cash flow of \$US 7 million of direct investments for planting, protection, assisted natural regeneration on at least 27,000 hectares of highly degraded landscapes was evaluated.

To address problems like this, WWF will build a coalition of actors comprising Indigenous Peoples and Local Peoples (IPLCs) farmers; Service providers like nursery managers, private sector and associated investors (some in the climate, energy and carbon marketing sector) mediated by MoUs, to support her restoration efforts. To facilitate, transparent interactions between actors and enable follow-up, the platform www.moneytrees.cm has been created to develop stakeholder profiles and ensure communications.

Our 2030 vision to bring together 3 million ha of degraded landscapes under restoration will use multiple, transparent, performance – related approaches on the ground to mobilize cash flow of at least \$US 1 million a year for Landscape restoration, when all actors are fully operational. In the projected 7 years (2023 – 2030) it is envisaged that through deliberate promotion of synergies between implementing actors, their programmes and other allied investors, even much more than the 3 million hectares will come under restoration, with multiple benefits.

In partnership with other actors, WWF-Cameroon aims to monitor progress as part of Cameroon's AFR100 Commitment, IUCN/Government of Cameroon Barometer, through other means such as WRI's Global Forest Watch tools and also via www.restor.eco

By Dr. Peter Mbile

WWF Senior Field Programmes Coordinator

RESTORATION IN SAVANNA AND FOREST TRANSITION ZONE

In the East Region of Cameroon, WWF is supporting a local NGO called APCRE in effort to forestall further degradation of the transition zone that links the Savannah ecosystem of the northern regions of the country to the dense equatorial rainforest of the East Region. This region has witnessed huge influx of refugees fleeing Boko Haram insurgency in the far north and refugees from Central African Republic.

"We have observed that this zone has been facing serious

degradation and if nothing is done at this state, the pressure will progressively extend to the last dense forest zone of Cameroon," says Belmond Tchoumba, Coordinator of WWF Central Africa Regional Forest Program. He said WWF is proactively engaging the communities in the area to restore the forest so that the population that has settled in the area can live sustainably without getting tempted to move into the dense forest.

APCRE has supported over 200 groups in the East Region after a vast sensitization campaign.

"Several hectares of degraded forest are under restoration," says Jean Bertin Koguem, Director of APCRE. "We are helping communities restore landscapes through planting of acacia and fruit trees. Indeed, we are combining reforestation and agriculture," he adds.

Yougouda, a farmer in Garoua Boulai, in the East Region is one of the beneficiaries of APCRE's support. "We are working in a group of 50 people to restore 20 hectares of forest through the cultivation of cassava mixed with acacia and some fruit trees. We know climate change is partly caused by deforestation that is why we are planting trees," Yougouda says.

Fidelis Manga

WWF-Cameroon Communications Coordinator



Yougouda wants to restore 20 hectares of degraded forest

EARTH HOUR FRENZY IN CAMEROON



Baka woman happy to plant a tree

Baka set out to plant trees during Earth Hour Celebrations in Mintom South Region of Cameroon



Pupils exhibit painting on nature during Earth Hour event

Students plant tree in Yokadouma, East Region of Cameroon



A cheer for nature after presentation of a sketch

In March 2022, we moved hundreds of youths to raise their voices for nature. Youth presented sketches, participated in painting competitions and planted trees in a show of love for nature. These actions were ramped up by the mellowed tone and mellifluous voice of iconic Cameroonian artist Mr. Leo who joint two other African Artists to compose a song for nature.

*“Nature is calling
It’s calling you and me”*
The artists sang



Music Superstar Mr. Leo ready to sacrifice life for nature



Through sketches, songs, culinary competition and quizzes, over 5000 pupils and students raised their voices for the planet weeks before Earth Hour 2022. The event was organized by an association known as Positive Black Show (Carton Rouge) in partnership with WWF and the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED).



Students of the School of International Relations in Yaounde listen to presentations on challenges facing nature during Earth Hour Conference

CONSERVATION EFFORTS GENERATING REVENUES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE AROUND LOBEKE



Marlyse got a modest home

Marlyse Bebe Guewa and Frédemi Sebeneli are natives of Mambele village working for the Lobeke National Park, a world heritage site within the TNS lands in the southeast of Cameroon. They have been working with the Park since 2014 when they were formally recruited as biomonitoring assistants. They participate in field biomonitoring by collecting data on wildlife presence in forest clearings (bais) and setting camera traps to film animals in the forest. As biomonitoring assistants, they lead teams into the forest comprising local Bantu and Baka community members (most of them youths) living in villages around the Park.

Bebe Guewa (mother of two) beams with joy as she talks about her achievement. From the savings of her income working in the forest, she was able to build a house for her family in Mambele. She explains how she achieved this. “Before going into the forest, I set an objective for what I want to do with my money. Thanks to this approach, I have been able to construct and equip my house,” Bebe Guewa says. She has bought a used motorcycle for her farm work that brings in extra income to cater for her household.

For Fredemi Sebeneli, while contributing to protect wildlife for future generations, s he has provided shelter for himself and his family. “I bought this house and a farmland from the money I made working in the forest,” states Sebeneli, pointing to his two-bedroom plank house situated near Mambele village square. Sebeneli explains that he also funds the education of his children and provide food for his household.

This is a marked departure from the past when money generated by local youths working in the park was often squandered. The examples of Bebe Guewa and Sebeni signals a gradual change, with many youths undertaking developmental projects.

Employment, income-generation

As part of its strategy to ensure that local Bantu and Baka people participate in the management of Lobeke National Park, the Park management with support from WWF and the TNS Foundation employ youths in communities around Lobeke who serve as biomonitoring assistants, guides and porters. For the biomonitoring team, an average mission in the forest lasts between 10 to 12 days with a daily stipend of FCFA 5000 (10 dollars) per person. At the end of a 12-day mission, a biomonitoring assistant earns an average FCFA 60,000 (120 US dollars).

Between October 2019 and November 2021, the Lobeke management paid out close to FCFA 16 million (US 29,000 dollars) as remuneration for field activities. Youths learn skills like the use of GPS and the compass and installing camera traps in the forest to film wildlife. They also participate in the entry of data collected from the field into a data base.

Challenges

Despite efforts made by the Lobeke Park management to provide jobs and income-generation opportunities for the youths, the park still faces an uphill task meeting the ever growing demand for employment by many young people in the over 20 villages surrounding Lobeke. Poverty is still rife in the communities where employment opportunities are scarce and basic amenities are absent.

However, sensitization and training offered by the Park, and support for community micro-projects are easing the burden of many households and contributing to improving the local people's living conditions.

Ernest Sumelong
WWF-Jengi Communications Officer

STUDY IDENTIFIES TWO SECTORS IMPACTING MOST ON BIODIVERSITY

Agriculture (rural production and agro-industries) and infrastructure (ports, roads, dams, etc.) are the sectors that impacting the most on biodiversity in Cameroon. This is the conclusion of a diagnostic study of the sectoral footprint on biodiversity carried out within the framework of the BIODIV 2030 Project led by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in partnership with the French Development Agency (AFD).

The BIODIV 2030 initiative aims to contribute, through scientific diagnosis, to voluntary sectoral commitments likely to reverse the decline in biodiversity by 2030 and to restore nature by 2050.

The objective of the study was to carry out a scientific and sectoral assessment of the main drivers of biodiversity erosion in Cameroon, to pre-identify through a scientific and participatory approach the two sectors that impact most on biodiversity and to highlight the contribution of these different economic sectors to the development/GDP of Cameroon and the cost of losses due to biodiversity erosion. It also aimed at facilitating dialogue between the different stakeholders in order to identify two economic sectors with the most impact on the decline of biodiversity.

The study recommended that the Cameroonian government initiates a process for integration of biodiversity into Cameroon's 2030 National Development Strategy. It urged the Cameroon Ministry of Environment, Nature

Protection and Sustainable Development to urgently develop essential elements of a strategy for the effective consideration of biodiversity issues in Cameroon's development vision, and proceed with the valuation of biodiversity and ecosystem services for their inclusion in development models.

Private sector involvement is essential

According to WWF, sustainable biodiversity conservation actions cannot be achieved without the engagements of companies that impact the environment. The real challenge in the various countries of the Congo Basin is to find the right balance between economic development and environmental preservation.

“The observation made at the global level is that it is difficult to talk about conservation without the companies that impact the environment. It is also difficult to ignore the economic impact of the same companies that pollute. The real challenge we have in our different countries in Central Africa is to find the right balance between economic development and environmental preservation,” said Marie Madeleine Bassalang, regional coordinator of the BIODIV 2030 project.

Fidelis Manga
WWF-Cameroon Communications Coordinator



Vast expanse of forest cleared to make way for palm oil plantation

WWF CAMEROON LAUNCHES PLASTIC-FREE CITY CAMPAIGN



Within the framework of the Leading the Change project, WWF Cameroon - Coastal Forests Programme, in partnership with the Limbe City Council on March 25, 2022, organized a plastic-free city campaign, focusing on the ocean. The campaign was an opportunity to raise awareness of the population of Limbe about the harmful effects of poor disposal of plastics on the soil, on wildlife, especially aquatic life, and to join efforts to formulate acceptable plastic waste management strategies for promotion by Limbe communities and councils.

The campaign was organised under the theme #StopPlasticPollution, and the slogan – Don't let our City go to Waste. It held at a time the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), the world's highest decision-making body on the environment, concluded a meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, to discuss and make decisions on the world's most pressing issues, ranging from deforestation to climate change and ocean pollution.

UNEA, during the meeting, adopted resolutions to start a global treaty on plastic pollution. Through it, governments have agreed to formally start negotiations on a legally-binding global treaty on plastic pollution. This follows more than four years of campaigning by WWF and many others. As a result of the campaigns, more than 2.2 million people signed a petition calling for a global agreement. The call has been backed by over 140 leading

businesses, as well as many governments, to stop the plastic crisis once and for all.

Applauding WWF Cameroon for this initiative, the representative of the Mayor of the Limbe City Council pledged their continuous support and to work closely with WWF to ensure that this initiative is done regularly in collaboration with more stakeholders and partners.

Ocean pollution everyone's concern

Addressing partners, stakeholders and the administration, the National Director for WWF Cameroon, Madam Clotilde Ngomba, said ocean pollution has become a great concern, not only because of the poor disposal of waste by its citizens, but also from neighboring countries. "This campaign will not be a one-off event. We will put in our collective efforts to seek bigger support and ensure that it is sustainable, and why not spread across Cameroon, with Limbe as the pilot," Madam Ngomba said.

While the beach clean-ups are great opportunities to raise awareness on this global problem, Madam Ngomba said cleaning up the mess is not a long-term solution. She cautioned stakeholders to ensure that this work goes further upstream where most of the dumping occurs in rivers and streams that empty themselves into the ocean. "We have realized that our coastlines are filled up with heaps of plastics, which makes it difficult for turtles and

other aquatic creatures to have enough breeding grounds. Some of the plastics are easily picked up as food by fish and other sea creatures, which block their respiratory tracts, causing their death," she added.

The 1st Assistant Senior Divisional Officer for Fako, chaired the event and launched the campaign with a call on everyone to put hands on deck and make Limbe more attractive to the many visitors who visit the town to enjoy its black sandy beaches.

Stakeholders promised to incorporate plastics waste management into their council and village development plans, while hoping that in no distant time, they all will come together to look for a way forward to ensure that this effort is sustainable.

Over 150 participants including 50 pupils of the WWF Partner school – Government Primary School Batoke and their teachers, stakeholders, partners, the administration, Limbe city council and Limbe 1 council staff, Batoke village council, school authorities, the bike riders within the municipality and the media, joined WWF Cameroon, to raise their voices for a plastic-free Limbe city.

Pre and post assessment of campaign

Assessing Prior to the campaign, a pre-assessment was carried out targeting some Limbe city dwellers to assess the level of awareness on the effects of plastic waste on the soil, man, and nature, especially

ly the aquatic life. Four days after the campaign, the same team, followed the same itinerary and carried out a post-assessment to ascertain the impact of the campaign on the behavior of the population. Both assessments were done using an awareness raising tool designed by the Capacity building advisor for WWF Coastal Forests programme.

The pre- and post-assessment results of the campaign showed that the campaign raised the level of awareness of the Limbe population from 23% to 39.7%. Meanwhile, the awareness and commitment on plastic waste disposal continues.

Three months after the campaign, the Mayor of the Limbe 1 Council mobilized her council staff (some dressed in WWF T-Shirts) in collecting plastics and other garbage from the streets of Limbe. This demonstrates a strong commitment towards the sustainability of the initiative. WWF plans to continue advocating for the Limbe 1 and 11 Councils to mainstream the initiative in their Council Development Plans.

Janet Mukoko

WWF-Cameroon Digital Communications Officer

ERNEST ADJINA: THIS IS MY STORY



Baka patriarch, Ernest Adjina, remains a hero among the indigenous community of Southeast Cameroon. Adjina led the Baka to sign a historic memorandum of understanding with the country's Minister of Forestry and Wildlife in February 2019. The convention grants Baka access right to three national parks; Lobeke, Boumba-Bek and Nki.

Born in the forest of Lobeke, Adjina, 63, was among few Baka who welcomed and worked for the creation of Lobeke National Park at a time their forest faced threat from timber exploitation and poaching. In collaboration with WWF and other conservation NGOs, Adjina sensitised Baka on the importance of protecting the forest. Having received primary and secondary school education, Adjina knew that the forest is sacred and central to Baka's survival and must be protected.

"I grew up with my parents in Lobeke forest, feeding on wild yams and honey. My parents carried out fishing and hunting. They showed me the way of the forest by initiating me into the Jengi (a Baka traditional ritual that is performed to fortify and protect young Baka men).

Adjina says the forest is more than just home for the Baka. "That is where we get food, medicine and train our children in the ways of our ancestors. Today, I am the one who initiates young Baka men into the Jengi. I take my children to the forest and train them. Other Baka parents do the same," he says.

Evolution of the forest

With the passage of time, Adjina would witness the brutal disruption of the once quiet and intact forest due to timber exploitation. "This was around 1978 when a road was carved out through the forest. A logging company was installed in the area, attracting many people. They began to destroy the forest and kill animals indiscriminately," he says.

The unfolding transformation was a source of worry for Adjina. "I was worried about what was going on. There was a lot of destruction and poaching was intense. People came from everywhere to kill elephants for their tusks," he recalls.

Creation of Lobeke National Park

If NGOs like the WCS, WWF and the then German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) installed in the Lobeke area in the early 1990's and succeeded in conservation and community work, Adjina played a vital role. "When these NGOs settled here for research and wildlife inventories, I helped show them the forest and different animal and plant species. I attended many meetings and workshops organized by GTZ and WWF. We learnt many things from them and also shared with them things we knew about the forest," Adjina explains.

The Baka leader was equally instrumental in the success of most sensitization meetings organized within communities before the creation of Lobeke National National. In many cases he served as interpreter and facilitator. "I went everywhere in Baka villages (Yokadouma, Mambele, Malea-Ancien, Ngatto-Ancien, Moloundou, Libongo, Salapoumbe, Kika) sensitizing my brothers, telling them why it was important that our forest be protected," he says.

Birth of ASBABUK

With the creation of Lobeke National Park, "there were restrictions as to where we could go. Nonetheless, we still had some access into the park to collect non-timber forest products. I was bothered by the way things were going. I began thinking of how Baka could make their voices heard and to present their worries," says Adjina.

In 2007, while working with local NGO CEFAID, Adjina suggested the idea of creating an association of Baka that could articulate their worries. "We created ASBABUK (Association of Baka of Boumba and Ngoko Division). With the support of WWF and local NGO CEFAID, we began working to secure access right into the forest for Baka.

Adjina secures access right for Baka

After more than a decade of lobbying, an unrelenting Adjina would finally meet Cameroon's Minister of Forests and Wildlife and present their request to him. On February 26, 2019, Adjina signed a historic MoU with the Minister, granting Baka free access right into Lobeke, Boumba Bek and Nki national parks.

With the support of WWF, Adjina and ASBABUK have been raising awareness in Baka villages on the content of the MoU. "Since the signing of the MoU, things are changing. Baka are now carrying out their activities freely," he states.



Ernest Adjina in the company of his Baka brothers

Challenges

Adjina's advocacy for the protection of the forest exposed him to criticism and endless questions. "There were moments I thought of giving up. Some people thought I had something to gain from the creation of the park. Trekking long distances to the villages to carry out sensitization was tough and negatively impacted my health. Besides, we were usually welcomed by a barrage of questions. It was a difficult moment," he says.

"Even the process to gain the access right for Baka into the forest took a very long time. Each time we knew we were close to obtain something, some objections came up and the process was jeopardized.

Today, Adjina appears satisfied in his native Mbateka Village near the park. Here he carries out subsistence farming to feed his family and coordinates the activities of ASBABUK as President. The group comprising leaders of Baka villages around Lobeke and Boumba Bek national parks, oversees problems relating to Baka rights and education.

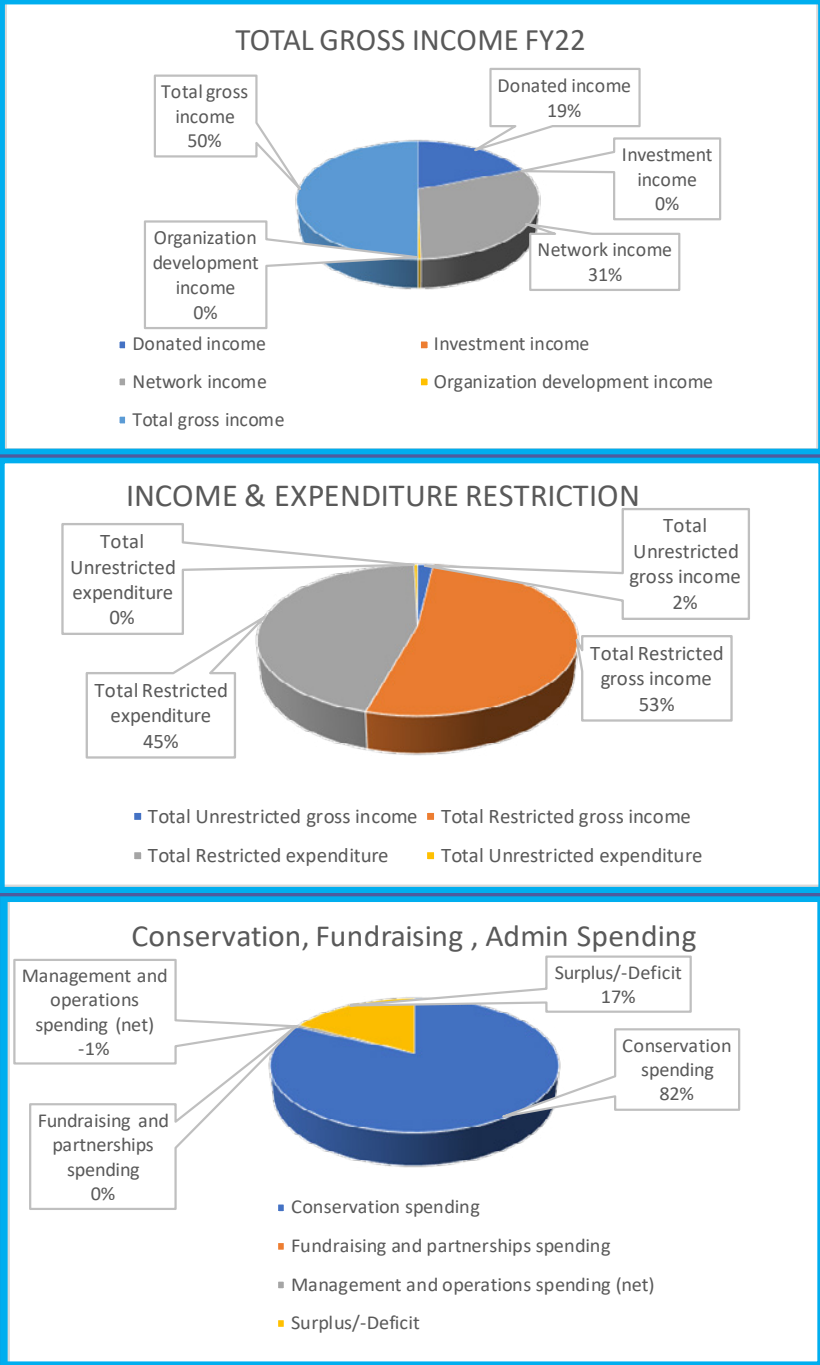
The future with education

Adjina looks into the future with optimism. Not only do Baka have access to the forest and natural resources, their children are also embracing education. "Over the years, WWF has supported the education of our children. Our children are now going to school like those of the Bantu. I know that one day my child will become an important person like others," Adjina says.

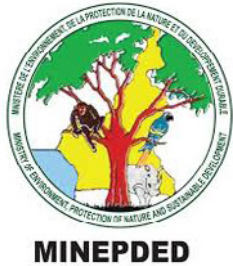
Ernest Sumelong
WWF-Jengi Communications Officer

WWF CCPO FINANCIAL REVIEW

The figures given represent income received from our donors including WWF network (WWF Germany, Sweden, Netherlands, France, US, UK), WWF-INT, Foundation (FTNS) over the period July 2021 to June 2022. We had an increase of income (27%) compared to 2021 financial year mainly due to the start of the Global Environment Facility (GEF7) project. Income from public sector partnership represents 47% in the 2022 financial year and unrestricted income stood at 4%.



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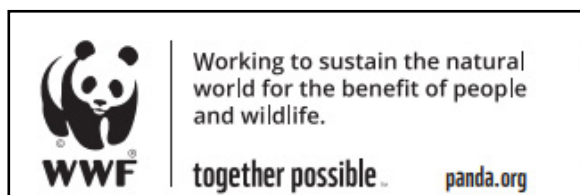


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Our Vision

Healthy ecosystems and thriving biodiversity
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