

**Enhancing equity in the relationship between protected areas and indigenous
and local communities in Central Africa, in the context of global change**

Final Report

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continent; their evolution strongly linked to changes to State legislation governing the management of forests.³ The advent of “Community Forests” in Cameroon since the 1994 legal reform was a good example of this positive trend, but so far lands attributed to Community Forests cover an insignificant proportion of the total forest estate across the region.

Conservation legislation in most Central African countries was initiated during the colonial period. Much of this body of law tended to centralise power over all natural resources within national State institutions, and most countries in the region adopted the same or similar protection measures at independence. Despite various legal

land tenure norms within new legal provisions (Alden Wily, 2002; Bruce and Migot-

few conservation organisations have dedicated adequate resources and genuine commitment to support the full participation by local communities in decisions about the management of their local environment. This is especially true where outside conservation agencies have secured official approval for their conservation initiatives over these lands.

Challenges and Options for Action (What can we do about it?)

The rest of this working document is taken up with a review of the key challenges to promoting more equitable relationships between indigenous and local communities and protected areas, along with an initial review of the opportunities that exist to overcome them. This list of challenges is not yet comprehensive, nor totally refined, as new experiences are constantly being documented, so we have tried to identify key challenges and areas for change, along with possible case study examples which serve to highlight both the problems faced, and positive ways forward. Four key areas of change have been identified, including:

Community Participation in Conservation

Legal Reform

Participatory Forest Management and Integrated Conservation and Development

Capacity-Building

These areas are addressed in turn below.

Community Participation in Conservation

Challenge: Community Conserved Areas, where resident communities have a greater or equal input to the State in conservation plans are very rare in Central Africa, especially in regions where extractive and conservation interests are active, and they are weakly appreciated by conservationists.

Options: Highlight examples where communities have developed autonomous conservation regimes. Draw lessons from these cases and those where communities and conservation organisations have worked together to establish and manage conservation zones, including in locations where armed conflict prevails. Use these to generate guidelines for enabling the recognition of local and indigenous communities' own conservation regimes.

Challenge: Where communities are involved conservation initiatives, their participation is usually a component of State or NGO sponsored projects in which

Box 2: Tayna Gorilla Reserve, DRC

The Tayna Gorilla Reserve located in North Kivu, DRC was created in 1999 through a collaboration between conservation agencies and two traditional leaders of the Batangi and Bamate people. The Statutes for this "Community Based Reserve" of 800 sq km constitute a formal agreement between the customary landholders, government and NGOs. Local people directly participate in the management of this protected area, whose goals includes both the conservation of biodiversity and the promotion of rural development. In this region of ongoing armed conflict, the Tayna forest guards are unarmed, and repressive protection measures are not employed by them. Communities have been directly involved in the development of the Reserve's management plan, including to establish a forest zoning plan and to address the long-term development of the park. The Reserve programme recognises the key role that continuing, customary use of the whole region shall play in the long-term management and conservation of the forest habitat. Key dilemmas faced by this project is the degree to which unauthorized use by outsiders can be prevented during periods of political instability, and how to include the local "Pygmy" population, who have so far been marginalised in the process of establishing this initiative.

Tasinanzu (2002), Kakule (2002)

Box 3: Batoufan Sacred Forests, Cameroon

Batoufan is located in Western Cameroon, and is an area controlled by around 100 independent chiefdoms who possess and guard a series of sacred forests through various community-based and secret societies. Many of these forests are of high biodiversity value, and different types of forest possess different cultural and spiritual status for the communities concerned. Access to these sacred forests is strictly controlled by community institutions, but community members can enter either to collect key medicines by sacred healers or through limited annual access, when all community members can enter to harvest a wide range of products. Key dilemmas faced by this community based conservation model include the diversification of cultural norms due to immigration to the zone, which are tending to dilute the authority of the customary system, and the conflicting rules between national forest and conservation laws, and customary protection measures and spiritual practices.

Tchouama (2002)

local communities do not possess significant management power.

Options: Promote community participation in the development of conservation projects, either through direct participation in the development of plans, or via new institutional forms which enable communities' views to be fully considered, and also permits customary access to and use of State protected areas.

Challenge: Communities are often very poorly represented in the development and

levels of community consultation by conservation project managers, and tendencies for them not to differentiate between information provision and participation, and to confuse communities as users, rather than as managers.

Options: Highlight how communities have been involved and benefited from better representation in the development and implementation of conservation projects, the benefits to conservation projects from this increased participation and consultation, and the weakness in existing processes. Highlight ways in which benefit-sharing can play a role in equalising the roles of communities *vis a vis* conservation project managers, and how negotiated access to selected park resources can provide a platform for dialogue between conservation agencies and local communities.

Box 6: Lobeke and Boumba National Parks, Cameroon

Lobeke National Park in South East Cameroon was established in 1999 over lands which local communities had previously been using to secure their livelihoods, and which also had been under threat from sustained logging pressures from outside. Boumba Park adjoins the Boumba River to the Northwest of Lobeke National Park. The two parks' proximities to CAR and Northern Congo is associated with intense

Box 7: Campo Ma'an National Park, Cameroon

Campo Ma'an National Park is located in Ocean Department of Southwest Cameroon, bordering Equatorial Guinea to the South. Originally established in 1932, it was fully demarcated and gazetted in the 1990s through GEF-financed technical support which helped MINEF elaborate the draft management plan for the zone. The draft plan for this park acknowledged the importance of communities in the realisation of the management plan, especially since many local and indigenous communities rely on forest resources which will be subject to increasing protection measures as full financing for the park is secured by WWF, who have been chosen to manage the park. Key stakeholders in the management plan that is still being negotiated include MINEF, WWF and the Bantu and Bagyeli communities who carry out hunting and gathering activities in the region of the park. Bagyeli communities in particular exhibit marked seasonal mobility across the region now covered by the park to pursue different livelihood activities, and up to now have been particularly marginalised in discussions about the management of the park. MINEF has now held several meetings with Bagyeli community members to discuss the draft management plan, and with other local communities hope that the final plan will adequately accommodate their subsistence requirements.

Nelson (2001/2), Owono, 2001/2.

Legal reform

Challenge: Most protected areas in Central Africa were created by colonial administrations, who were repressive, and during the intervening years there has not been much interest or incentive for them to develop working partnerships with local communities.

Options: Highlight benefits flowing to conservation projects from partnerships with local communities. Promote innovative, local level, formal (government-sanctioned) agreements between conservation agencies and local communities, to serve as guideposts for legislative reforms.

Box 8: Key Benefits to Community Collaboration in Central Africa

Commitment: local and indigenous communities in rural areas rely on their environment to secure their livelihoods, and they are primary stakeholders in environmental conservation;

Efficiency: local and indigenous communities often have the best knowledge about the environment in their areas, so can enable the development of more efficient and socially acceptable methods of protecting key species and habitats;

Sustainability: local and indigenous communities are mostly stable within their region, so conservation measures that they implement are durable, and;

Local Benefits: local and indigenous communities can benefit from support provided by outside conservation agencies in exchange for their efforts to conserve their environment.

Challenge: In Central Africa most forestry and conservation legislation is still founded on exclusionary principles, and is ill-adapted to participatory approaches which may permit communities access to conservation areas.

Options: Highlight how communities' legal rights of use in protected areas have been eliminated, and the impacts of this on the long-term sustainability of community livelihoods and the viability of conservation projects. Identify concrete cases where conservation goals in areas managed under IUCN classes I-IV are being achieved while local communities use rights are preserved or enhanced.



Challenge: With the exception of Uganda, where individuals can secure individual title to land which they have held durably under customary rules, in most of Central Africa it is extremely difficult to secure formal legal validation for customary land tenure systems.

Options: Promote new laws that recognise and validate communal land tenure for communities in Central Africa and link this development to agreements between communities and government authorities over community involvement in conservation programmes.

Participatory Forest Management and Integrated Conservation and Development

Challenge: For lands outside IUCN classes I-IV, uptake of new forms of legal landholding by communities has been slow, and they often do not address underlying

Box 10: Community Forestry in Cameroon

In 1994 a new forest law for Cameroon was enacted and one of its key provisions opened up the way for communities to secure rights to the forest in their area by registering the area as a “Community Forest.” Community Forests are areas of up to 5,000 ha which may be attributed to communities under short-term (25 year) leases to enable communities to use the forest to sustain their livelihoods, especially through forestry exploitation. Part of the procedure by which Community Forests are established involves the identification of a Community Forest Management Agreement which is “a contract by means of which the administrative body in charge of forests entrust a part of the national forest to a community to be managed, conserved and used in the interests of the community” (Decree 95/531, translated by Auzel et al). Through this now well-known legal provision communities have been able to secure legal albeit temporary rights over forestland in their area, and use it to generate income, especially through locally controlled and managed timber exploitation. In addition, communities can continue to use the forest to secure hunting and gathering requirements, or may license professional hunting to outsiders, and the lands are protected under law from unauthorised exploitation by outsiders. Although the registration process to secure Community Forestry status has proved cumbersome and expensive for many communities, improvements to implementation have been made and the demand by communities to secure Community Forests for themselves is intense. In the face of outside logging pressures, communities that have obtained Community Forest Certification have begun to assert themselves and lodge complaints to the authorities about illegal logging on their lands. This is helping communities to gain confidence about their role as authoritative managers of the forests in their areas. Key drawbacks to the Community Forest path for communities is the complexity involved in securing registration, the short duration of the “lease” on the forest lands, the limited (5,000 ha) size of the forest which can be registered, and the fact that the rights allocated by government to communities are merely usufruct rights, rather than permanent and secure proprietary rights. In many cases, communities are obliged to register Community Forests over lands which have not been the main focus of their traditional customary tenure systems, while these remain vulnerable to outside exploitation.

Alden Wily (2001), Auzel et al (2001), Gardner et al (2001), Tichmayer (2002).

problems faced by them.

Options: Facilitate more widespread promotion of devolved community forest management regimes through, increased funding for development of the necessary conservation and community institutions, and the devolution of authority over management regimes to local levels so that communities can participate fully in the development and implementation of protected area management plans.

Capacity-Building

Challenge: There is a lack of capacity amongst communities to participate effectively in collaboration with conservation agencies and government, and there is a very low level of community participation in conservation agency-sponsored consultations about how conservation areas should be managed.

Options: Support capacity building amongst communities, including training, to help them develop better and more equitable links and improved cooperation with conservation agencies which are working in their region.

This is a cross-cutting issue which arises in virtually every case which has been outlined in the above cases. A key constraint to promoting increased collaboration between conservation organisations and communities is that local and indigenous communities do not yet have the confidence and skills to negotiate fairly with protected area staff, and many have not yet developed appropriate representative community institutions which are able to do so. Many local and indigenous communities hold negative views of conservation organisations, who they most associate with removing communities' access to and use of areas over which they have traditionally exercised their customary rights. Communities across the region are very suspicious of the overall objectives of conservation organisations, especially now that conservation agencies are trying to tap into development aid money, which in 1998, for example, formed 24% of WWF International's total income, grown from just 1% in 1989 (Jeanrenaud, 2002).

It is clear that forest-based communities can gain confidence and other skills if they and their representatives are able to participate in discussions with park managers and field staff from a position of strength. In most cases cited in this paper at least some community members have become more experienced in attending meetings with government and conservation authorities and in expressing their views to a diverse audience. However many protected area staff in the region are ill-equipped to understand how to treat communities as partners, rather than as subordinates. Although field staff are able to adapt their style and language to suit the changing jargon coming out of conservation and development discourse and donor funding requirements, many have not been exposed to guidelines on participation, and have not learned how to work in a participatory mode. Many confuse information provision with participation, so that communities become audiences rather than partners in dialogue and negotiation.

Challenge: There is a lack of knowledge amongst protected areas staff about the need for participation by and collaboration with local communities in conservation, and how to carry it out.

Options: Support increased training for government conservation staff and funding for recruiting new expertise and for new "high risk" initiatives to foster improved collaboration with communities to achieve their conservation goals. Establish clear job incentives for staff to encourage the development of new working practices. Establish guidelines that set clear standards for conservation agencies to follow.

communities in their areas, and need to gain a better practical understanding of the modalities of entering into equal dialogue with communities if the number of CCAs are to grow. Adequate funding by conservation agencies will be required to ensure this happens.

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