

Cameroon

Securing Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Conservation: Reviewing and promoting progress in Cameroon



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Securing Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Conservation: Reviewing and promoting progress in Cameroon

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This review builds upon the previous report,
**'Indigenous Forest Peoples and Protected Areas in Cameroon: A review
of Cameroon's implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on
Protected Areas'**
published in February 2008

Three Cameroon case studies appear in FPP's book, *Indigenous peoples and
protected areas in Africa. From principles to practice*, published in 2003
to coincide with the 5th World Parks Congress:

**'One forest and two dreams: the constraints imposed on the Baka in
Miatta by the Dja Wildlife Reserve'** by Samuel Nguiffo

**'Protected areas and indigenous peoples: the paradox of conservation
and survival of the Baka in Moloundou region (south-east Cameroon)'** by
Benoit Ndameu, and

**'The extent of Bagyeli Pygmy involvement in the development and
Management Plan of the Campo Ma-an UTO'**
by Joseph Claude Owono.

All are available on FPP's website: www.forestpeoples.org



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Translated from the French by John Nelson, Africa Policy Advisor, FPP

Cover photograph: A Baka project worker explains the work carried out by
local communities to document where their traditional
forest areas have been overlapped by the new Boumba
Bek National Park in the Eastern Province of Cameroon

Photographs: John Nelson

Executive Summary

This report reviews progress towards application in Cameroon of conservation standards protecting community rights. These standards are embodied in the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Durban Accord and Action plan of the 2003 World Parks Congress, and the resolutions of the 2004 IUCN World Conservation Congress. The review focuses assessment of progress in relation to indigenous peoples living in Cameroon's forests, especially those Baka, Bakola and Bagyeli living in and around Lobeke, Boumba Bek, Nki and Campo Ma'an National Parks, as well as the Dja Wildlife Reserve that has been declared a World Heritage Site.

This case study builds upon work since 2000 by FPP and local partners to document in Central Africa the degree to which the 'new conservation paradigm' recognising community rights is being applied on the ground, and to promote this in conservation projects affecting local and indigenous communities. The research for this Cameroon case study is based upon: outcomes of various processes addressing community rights issues in and around the protected areas mentioned above; regional meetings between donors, practitioners, NGOs and community representatives to explore how to address gaps between international promises and on-the-ground progress; and new interviews with staff of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Cameroonian government ministries, protected area directors and parks staff, and NGOs working with forest communities all over Cameroon.

This review highlights some of the positive initiatives that have taken place since 2004 to encourage application of the new standards protecting human rights. However, almost all of this work has been done by civil society organisations, rather than by conservation NGOs or the Cameroonian government.

The report concludes that unfortunately, little progress has been made in Cameroon to secure forest communities' rights. Conservation organisations and donors, and the government, have done almost nothing in Cameroon to implement their international commitments to protect community rights in their conservation projects. Most of the new standards to which they have agreed remain unknown at the local level. Yet it is government people at the local level who most need to be informed about these new standards, and be given support to implement them. However, in addition to being impeded by a persistent lack of information and support, they are also constrained by outdated laws which contradict the government's international commitments.

The report identifies the tendency by government and conservation agencies and donors to organise workshops and conferences without any follow-up, and to arrange trainings without any field action. Those initiatives by conservation organisations claiming to target communities are having little impact, and most remain unknown to communities, who are supposed to be the main beneficiaries.

The case study asks what is the point of conservation organisations and governments making commitments to protect community rights if they do nothing to implement them?

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Introduction

This report reviews progress towards application in Cameroon of conservation standards protecting community rights. These standards are embodied in the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Durban Accord and Action plan of the 2003 World Parks Congress, and the resolutions of the 2004 IUCN World Conservation Congress.

The review focuses on assessing progress in relation to indigenous peoples living in Cameroon's forests, especially those Baka, Bakola and Bagyeli living in and around Lobeke, Boumba Bek, Nki and Campo Ma'an National Parks, and the Dja Wildlife Reserve that has been declared a World Heritage Site.

For many years these indigenous communities have lived in these highly biodiverse zones, which only recently have been transformed into protected areas. The fact that in recent times these places have gained recognition as areas of high natural biodiversity is linked to the fact that the indigenous peoples living there were always natural allies of conservation. These groups should, therefore, be involved in their management.

However, a key characteristic that all these indigenous groups share in Cameroon is that they are in almost constant conflict with conservation groups, including international organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and ECOFAC, along with Cameroonian government forest agencies, and especially the forest guards who are supported by these organisations.

The customs, social systems and cultures of Baka, Bakola and Bagyeli are closely linked to the laws governing the natural ecosystems that they use – for example certain animals are venerated and protected locally as totems, and are therefore protected by communities.¹ In recent times these communities – and their environments – have become vulnerable to outside forces intent on exploiting these ecosystems in non-sustainable ways.

It is now 20 years since the United Nations Development Programme (UNEP) launched its initiative to protect the world's resources. The Convention on Biological Diversity was created and adopted by many governments over 16 years ago. And it has been four years since the Durban World Parks Congress, where numerous other resolutions protecting biodiversity as well as community rights were also agreed. The result has been the development of a 'new conservation paradigm' that should link protection of biodiversity more closely with the promotion of communities' rights. It is now the right time to pause for reflection, to evaluate where this is heading.

This case study builds upon work since 2000 by FPP and local partners to document in Central Africa the degree to which the 'new conservation paradigm' recognising community rights is being applied on the ground. The research for this Cameroon case study is based upon outcomes of various processes addressing community rights issues in and around the protected areas mentioned above: regional meetings between donors, practitioners, NGOs

¹ Nelson, John and Messe Venant (September 2008) 'Indigenous peoples' participation in mapping of traditional forest resources for sustainable livelihoods and great apes conservation. Report to the Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNEP)'. Project report. Moreton-in-Marsh: Forest Peoples Programme. www.forestpeoples.org .

and community representatives to explore how to address gaps between international promises and on-the-ground progress; and with new interviews with staff of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Cameroonian government ministries, protected area directors and parks staff, and NGOs working with forest communities all over Cameroon.

COP 7 of the CBD: Application of Articles 8(j) and 10(c)

In Cameroon policies and initiatives related to natural resources have generally been developed without sustainable participation of those who rely upon them the most, i.e. local forest communities. Like other countries in the sub-region, Cameroon has for a long time employed a highly centralised management strategy that has generally conferred control over natural resources to forest and wildlife ministries, or to outside experts. Government ministries for forests and wildlife have an official monopoly over the control and management of natural resources. Their local branches (the provincial and departmental delegations) are focused most on the direct management of wildlife. Protected areas are also managed by Cameroon's central government agencies, but almost always with the support of international organisations, including among others the WWF, the IUCN, ECOFAC and GTZ.

The centralised nature of government management of natural resources in Cameroon has not substantially changed over the past decade. This means that in general, and with a few notable exceptions, indigenous community rights have not been protected in government forest management plans, and indigenous peoples are not really involved in the management of national parks and reserves, logging concessions or safari areas. This suggests that application of CBD Articles 8(j) and 10(c), along with decisions of the 7th Conference of Parties (COP 7) has not moved forward substantially in Cameroon.

Various groups in Cameroon have benefited in one way or another from forest peoples' traditional knowledge They include:

- logging companies, who use indigenous peoples to help them identify tree species and organise their work in the forest;
- safari companies, who use indigenous peoples as hunting guides due to their knowledge of the forest, their ability to mimic and even call animals, and for their highly developed senses;
- conservation organisations, including WWF, GTZ and WCS, who use forest peoples to help them with their biological and botanical studies.

There is little debate over the extremely high competence of indigenous peoples in the forest, or of their extensive forest knowledge and expertise. However, in reality, the creation and management of protected areas in Cameroon has done nothing to protect the rights of indigenous peoples to their traditional knowledge. The few initiatives that are starting to move in this direction are still in their infancy. The notion of land rights remains purely a western idea.

The ancestral interdependence of indigenous communities and their biological resources, and the need to guarantee that these communities will be able to benefit fairly from them in the same way as other communities, is linked to their use of traditional practices and knowledge to conserve natural resources.

They are the best conservationists, that is why we find so many resources in the places where they have lived for thousands of years,

confirmed the provincial head of protected areas in Cameroon's Eastern province. Unfortunately, the government of Cameroon has not yet fully committed itself officially, or on a large scale, to take account of indigenous communities' traditional knowledge, or to enable their active participation in the management of protected areas. The government has done even less to share the benefits of protected areas with the communities.

Article 10(c) stipulates that each contracting state, as far as it is able, should: '*protect and encourage the sustainable use of customary resource compatible with their conservation and sustainable use requirements*'. However, under Cameroonian law entry to protected areas is forbidden to everyone – Baka and Bantu alike. This means that communities are being prevented from carrying out traditional activities, and leading to their decline. This represents a serious threat to the survival of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge, along with that of other local groups, which in turn is threatening the survival of the way of life of both Baka and Bantu. Their strong attachment to the forest is illustrated by this exclamation of an old Baka from Mbandjani (a village which lies between Lobeke and Boumba Bek National Parks), who said:

If I do not go into the forest, I do not eat.

In the case of Cameroon, the law preventing the use of these forests has taken precedence over any measures to protect communities' customary use of biological resources. The traditional, cultural practices that are recognised as being compatible with the conservation of biological resources have been downgraded or even ignored. The protection of 'threatened species' is the only priority addressed by the creation of protected areas, even though indigenous peoples such as Baka, Bakola and Bagyeli who live in the areas where national parks are being created are already protecting such species for cultural and religious reasons.

With the support of the NGOs Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) and the Centre for Environment and Development (CED), studies of indigenous peoples' customary use have been undertaken. These include:

1. Protecting the rights of Bagyeli around Campo Ma'an National Park (2001-2003).
2. Protecting and encouraging customary use of biological resources by the Baka in the west of the Dja Biosphere Reserve. Contribution to the implementation of Article 10(c) of the Convention on Biological Diversity Belmont Tchoumba and John Nelson et al...
3. Protecting the cultural rights of Baka around Boumba Bek National Park (2007 and 2008).

WWF has also carried out similar studies of communities' traditional use, including a recent collaboration during 2007 and 2008 with FPP and CED on the studies around Boumba-Bek and Nki National Parks.

All these studies are available, but little has been done to act upon their recommendations.

Access and benefit sharing

A workshop was held in August 2008 related to the 9th Conference of Parties (COP 9) which had taken place in May 2008. The goal was to enable indigenous peoples to contribute effectively to the application of the CBD in Central Africa with relation to access and benefit sharing (APA), and especially to genetic resources. It also aimed to inform indigenous peoples about this process.

In addition, the meeting provided information on the work programme of the CBD as it relates to article 8(j). This was the first workshop in Cameroon that aimed to identify and define the role of indigenous peoples in the process of enabling APA. It also provided an opportunity to take into account decisions made at COP 9. Organised by the CBD Secretariat, the workshop was made possible thanks to financial support from Canada, France, COMIFAC, GTZ and WWF. Participants included indigenous peoples from Gabon, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, and Cameroon.

Over the course of those discussions the forest authorities clearly recognised that the issue of benefit sharing still needed to be addressed, that a path towards securing this needed to be developed, and that our eyes needed to be focused on this in the future. Another important aspect of this debate relating to Cameroon's biological diversity was how to use the traditional knowledge of Baka and Bagyeli in the management of protected areas. Unfortunately these issues remained at the level of speculation, and little attention was paid to the views of indigenous peoples during this discussion.

The Baka of the Boumba-Ngoko Department in Cameroon are increasingly informed about these issues, and have already questioned WWF Yokadouma about what benefits they received from the 'Jengi Project'², which receives substantial funding, and which they think should be shared with them.

The government and protected areas

For the government agencies responsible for protected areas in Cameroon, the 1994 law which regulates forests and wildlife is the overarching authority. This law forbids access and use of resources inside national parks. The law was passed by the members of Cameroon's National Assembly, who were elected by the people of Cameroon, and must therefore be followed by all Cameroonians without exception. But the law also has to cope with local custom. Cameroon's protected areas were created to respond to a specific need, and to enable the government to conform to international agreements. For those charged

² Jengi is one of the most respected Baka spirits. Young Baka men are initiated by Jengi. Someone who is not initiated should not use its name lightly.

with managing Cameroon's forests at the local level, substantive negotiations over enabling traditional activities inside protected areas are not possible.

For example, the recent (July 2008) meeting with government representatives in Yokadouma to discuss the outcomes of community data collection around Boumba Bek National Park (where there was high participation of indigenous Baka) the discussion came to an abrupt end. This was due to communities' recommendations regarding how to take into account the concerns of local Baka in the management plan for this park which encroaches on their traditional lands. There is now great hope that Baka's traditional usage rights will be recognised in the plan in line with international texts.

Cameroonian law 94/01 of 20 January relating to the regulation of forests and wildlife in Cameroon governs the application of national forest policies. Respecting the spirit of this law should mean respecting the rights of local and indigenous peoples.

Lack of dissemination of information

The Durban Accord is not being applied in Cameroon, and in fact civil servants are unaware of it, as are local and indigenous peoples living around protected areas. In most cases, international instruments concerning biodiversity linked to the CBD and the CBD's Programme of Work on Protected Areas are not known of by the local population, or even by civil servants in MINFOF (the ministry of forests) who are responsible for applying these decisions in the field. Field experience shows that in reality, civil servants in charge of forests often allow indigenous peoples to access forests even when this contradicts the letter of the law, because they realise the need for communities to access their forests to survive. They experience daily the problems with trying to apply an inappropriately designed law. This makes their situation and relations with communities very complicated.

A large number of civil servants and other people working around protected areas, along with local and indigenous communities, do not have adequate access to new knowledge, information and guidelines coming from science, traditional knowledge and practice. For example, local forest managers were not aware of the COP 9 meeting nor the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in October 2008. They also have few opportunities to exchange lessons learned from their work in order to be able to apply new policies, strategies and practices. There is usually a long delay before managers are informed about new important themes which they need to be aware of in order to ensure the long-term viability of the conservation sites for which they are directly responsible.

In general the staff sent to participate in international meetings and learn about new techniques and ideas are from the central administration. Weak and slow bureaucracies slow down information sharing with other parts of the system, i.e. with local offices. There is therefore a need to conceive some new mechanisms to enable effective exchange of experience and knowledge with and between field managers. There is a need to enable rapid diffusion of lessons and guidelines deriving from science, traditional knowledge and field practice.

Akwé: Kon Guidelines

The Akwé: Kon Guidelines aim to provide a general guide for practitioners and governments on how to integrate local and indigenous communities' cultural, ecological, social, and biodiversity priorities into working procedures and future impact studies. They provide a framework for collaboration to enable governments and protected area managers, decision makers and administrators of development projects to prevent, reduce and mitigate the negative impacts of policies and proposed projects. The adoption of these guidelines was one of the accomplishments of COP 7 in 2004. Unfortunately, and in spite of their clear importance, these guidelines remain unknown in Cameroon. The issue of information flow is a real problem preventing application of Cameroon's international commitments, and this needs to be addressed before 2010.

Obstacles to the implementation of the CBD programme of work on protected areas

One of the principal obstacles to the application of the CBD in and around protected areas in Cameroon is the fact that the forest administration is mostly focused on issues related to timber production, favouring logging over wildlife protection. The reality in the field is that the forest administration does not recognise indigenous peoples' rights, and does not want indigenous peoples to actually participate in the development and implementation of forest policies. This is a problem in all forest areas where indigenous peoples live in Cameroon. Around protected areas and in the different government administrations the majority of civil servants responsible for management have never heard of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas or the Durban Action Plan. This is a serious handicap preventing the application of these decisions in the management of protected areas.

The process of developing the management plan for Boumba Bek National Park is being held back by a lack of transparency by local forest authorities and WWF representatives. During a meeting at WWF in Yokadouma on July 1, 2008 the absence of the *conservateur*, coupled with the inflexibility of WWF managers did not permit the numerous representatives of indigenous Baka communities a fair hearing. They had come to share their worries over the catastrophic impacts on their lives by the management of the national park, and to present their views on the content of the park management plan currently being developed. Unfortunately, the threat of the Forest Law of January 2004 weighed heavily upon them, and they will be obliged to return to the issue at a later date if the plan is developed in line with their free, prior and informed consent. If this does not happen there will be heavy negative consequences on the lives, lands and territories of Baka around Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks, and which they will share with other indigenous peoples living around Lobeke and Campo Ma'an National Parks and the Dja Wildlife Reserve.

Conservation organisations and indigenous peoples

Relations between conservation organisations and indigenous peoples in Cameroon between 2004 and 2008 have not really changed. As emphasised above, indigenous people

feel they are becoming strangers in their own houses. Even now, in 2008, Baka and Bagyeli run when they see a car that looks like it belongs to WWF, even if it has nothing to do with conservation.

Studies already carried out

In Cameroon most Baka communities have been displaced from their dwelling places and their traditional activities by public powers – primarily those charged with the management of protected areas. These communities now live on the edges of protected areas. Customary hunting is now forbidden inside the parks. In addition, Baka face serious discrimination from neighbouring Bantu communities, the other main group who live near the parks and along the roads.

The Cameroonian government has made efforts with their partners to address issues related to biodiversity conservation and forest management through certification processes, which aim to take into account socio-economic aspects relevant to local forest populations. However, practically nothing has been done to help Baka whose lives are intimately linked to those forests.

It was in this context that, with the support of the Forest Peoples Programme, in 2007 the GTZ agreed to finance the project entitled: 'Securing the rights of indigenous Baka communities around Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks'. The project aims to support implementation of Article 10(c) of the CBD in Cameroon. The Centre for Environment and Development (CED) is the partner organisation funded by GTZ to implement the project, which they are doing with four local organisations, Okani, AAFEBEN, CEFAID, and PERAD.³ The project was initiated in July 2007.

The objective of the project is to help local and indigenous communities secure their customary rights in the management plans for Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks. This participatory project aims to help indigenous Baka build up their capacity to defend their rights and to document their ancestral lands, using participatory mapping of their traditional areas. The resulting maps are to become the basis for negotiations with government authorities charged with managing the parks.

These maps will soon become available and communities' traditional, cultural practices that are compatible with conservation and sustainable management will soon be identified. A framework for discussion between Baka and Bantu communities and the State shall soon be established with local government agencies responsible for the management of the national parks, along with their technical partners (local and international NGOs, and economic operators). The customary rights of Baka from in and around Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks will ultimately become protected in the written management plan for these parks, and this will be approved by the State. The actions and results of this project will

³ CED is based in Yaounde. CED's programme coordinator is Belmond Tchoumba and Georges Thierry is directly responsible for the CED/GTZ project. Messe Venant is the general coordinator of the Baka NGO, Okani, which is based in Bertoua. Miranda Akongongol is the coordinator of Yokadouma-based AAFEBEN. Victor Amougou is the coordinator of CEFAID, also based in Yokadouma. PERAD is based in Lomie, and coordinated by Angele Ankoh.

become validated and disseminated in national forums, sub-regional forums (COMIFAC, TNS) and international forums (COP–CBD). These are the high ambitions that NGOs are now promoting through this project in order to help indigenous peoples – who today have almost no voice.

Involvement of NGOs

Since 2004 FPP and CED have been working with local organisations to support communities from around Campo Ma'an National Park, Boumba Bek National Park, Nki National Park and the Dja Wildlife Reserve to document their traditional resource use. This has included putting pressure on WWF, who provides financial support to the Cameroonian government conservation efforts, to revise its own approach to working with indigenous communities.

During a meeting at the end of 2006 FPP, CED, Baka community representatives, WWF Yokadouma and local conservation staff agreed to collaborate to document Baka traditional use in and around Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks. The objective of this collaboration was to secure the rights of these communities in those national parks and in commercial hunting zones, the so-called safari concessions, as well as in logging concessions, through official protection in government-approved forest management plans.



Yokadouma NGOs, including Baka staff, being trained by CED in the use of new mapping technologies. They are now using these practical tools in their work with communities in the field.

In order to do this, between 2006 and 2008, meetings and activities were carried out to help communities prepare their maps. The support of local NGOs in this process was extremely important. The new Helveta mapping technology, which enabled the mostly non-literate community members to collect data, was extremely useful in this process.

The community mapping work intensified during 2008, despite several regrettable hesitations on the part of local WWF staff and the continuing unavailability of the new *conservateur* of Boumba Bek National Park. This mapping process was funded by GTZ along with UNEP.

It is important to note that this mapping process followed a series of studies initiated in 2001, carried out by FPP and local partners in 10 African countries including Cameroon, which aimed to examine the application of international standards protecting indigenous peoples' rights in and around protected areas, and which highlighted a range of violations of indigenous peoples' rights.

Project activities between 2006 and 2008 focused on providing information and training to communities to establish community dialogue and mapping. This was done by building up the capacity of communities, including providing them with information about their land rights. Several draft versions of community maps are now available, and are proving useful in discussions with conservation officials.

The table below summarises outcomes of discussions between government representatives at the CBD workshop in Libreville in January 2008.

Table: A synthesis of obstacles, next steps, and support required, identified by African government representatives at the Libreville CBD workshop in January 2008

Theme	Obstacle	Next Steps	Support Required
Analysis of issues	Lack of field data Insufficient scientific knowledge Insufficient or lack of marine and transfrontier protected areas Lack of funding Insufficient coordination	Institutionalisation National strategies Inventories Developing management plans Training Development of a national data base	Development of political support Provision of expertise Capacity building Financial and technical support
Evaluation of management efficiency	Weak or non-existent institutions Lack of coordination Human resource shortage Lack of strategic vision Lack of monitoring and evaluation Lack of management	Finalising management plans Exchanging experiences Developing national strategies	Lobbying international organisations Capacity building Targeted information provision Technical support
Funding sustainability	Lack or absence of political support Weak legislation Lack of knowledge about funding mechanisms Lack of participation by private sectors Lack of funding	Identifying donors Accelerating the mobilisation of funding Developing terms of reference Identifying experts Improving local knowledge and expertise	Capacity building Diversification of revenue source

It is clear from the above summary that African governments and conservation organisations have many of their own problems to address. This is a major reason why indigenous peoples' priorities have been continuously neglected in the management of protected areas. What is even more worrying is that the priorities of local peoples – whether they be indigenous or not – are still not on the agenda of urgent issues that African

governments aim to address. At the last CBD meeting in Gabon community issues were addressed as follows:

to carry out actions necessary to build up the capacities of local and indigenous communities to become effectively involved in the identification, planning, and establishment of protected areas.

These next steps have not been scheduled, but will likely mean only that indigenous peoples will be invited to attend meetings and conferences, i.e. they will be physically present.

Financial support to protected area management

The management of protected areas in Cameroon is supported financially by international donors. As with other sectors, it is these donors who set the agenda and influence management policies. Despite the language of the Durban Accord, conservation organisations have not significantly changed their policies in relation to indigenous peoples in Cameroon. Instead, the status quo has been maintained by talking about a 'process.' Conservation organisations have remained focused on the preservation of wildlife through a ferocious attack against poaching: following Durban, the WWF-trained ecoguards (who fall under the control of the Government of Cameroon) have had a serious impact on local people, leading to repressive rule.

Most other funding for conservation, for example by the United Nations Development Fund, the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), have promoted international cooperation, and have financed the fight against loss of biodiversity, climate change, loss of the ozone layer and water degradation. Funding for social issues has not been forthcoming, and nothing has been done to implement the Durban Accord.

Transfrontier protected areas

The Sangha Trinational protected area (TNS) was formally established at Durban to group together protected areas in Cameroon (Lobeke), Central African Republic (Dzanga-Sangha) and the Republic of Congo (Nouabale-Ndoki). This vast forest space is home to thousands of indigenous forest peoples whose lives could become severed from their forest due to conservation pressures, and who will be forced to adapt their lifestyles to practising agriculture in order to survive. The TNS Foundation has raised considerable financial support, all of which will be targeted to conservation thereby excluding the communities entirely. Local indigenous communities are not even aware of the foundation since its dealings are only with civil servants. The decision of whether or not to help a particular community or local community organisation is left up to conservation agencies.

The IUCN and GEF

The IUCN developed a programme called 'Landscapes and Livelihoods' after recognising the need for more concentrated efforts to coordinate its work in the field with national poverty-reduction policies. This programme is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs via its development agency, DGIS. The programme aims to document the role played by natural resources in enabling poor rural people to secure their livelihoods. The programme will be implemented within the framework of the TNS, and in Cameroon the project is targeting the local population around Lobeke National Park. The goal of the project is to combat poverty by helping local rural people increase their economic opportunities by supporting them to market non-timber forest products. The four-year Landscapes and Livelihoods project (2007–2010) works in collaboration with the World Bank, the International Tropical Timber Organisation, the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and the Rights and Resources Initiative. Already approaching its third year, the question remains: to what extent have local and indigenous communities been involved in this project? None of the local population is aware of this programme. Why?

The GEF is targeting increased involvement by Bagyeli communities around Campo Ma'an National Park in the management and conservation of biodiversity, based upon their forest knowledge. It aims to support Bagyeli to protect their customary use in line with sustainability and conservation objectives. More precisely, to help indigenous communities protect their knowledge, innovations and practices while also supporting the development of alternative viable, sustainable and appropriate economic activities. The principal activities are providing support to Bagyeli of South Cameroon for beekeeping, ecotourism, and documentation of their traditional forest knowledge through:

1. Campo-Lolodorf Sustainable Livelihoods Pygmy Engagement Project, and;
2. Supporting Capacity Building of Local Civil Society in Project Formulation.

Ongoing work by either the IUCN or the GEF focuses only on capacity building via more and more workshops. Unfortunately the beneficiaries of these trainings are not provided with the means to reach the communities. This means training without an outcome.

Conclusion

The Durban World Parks Congress resulted in recommendations that gave responsibility to various groups, including governments, the IUCN, and WWF. A number of these recommendations have been addressed, including for example, the provision of funding for protected areas, and the creation of a protected area network (RAPAC). However, some recommendations have remained on paper only– unimplemented – especially those relating to the need to take into account indigenous peoples in the management of protected areas, and in the sharing of benefits from conservation. Objective 2 of the Programme of Work on indigenous peoples has yet to be addressed. Many good words have been spoken in these large meetings, but there is a need to go further to address the issue of benefit sharing.

People forget quickly. The years 2006–2008 were a period of awakening as many workshops and meetings took place. Resistance by central government authorities to circulating information on amendments to the international policies discussed in these meetings is hindering development of the changes that could be secured at the local level.

The gap between rhetoric and reality in the field is huge. Some projects are intended to be carried out with the communities but the communities do not even know about them. The choices of project fail to take into account the real needs of the local people. Why invest in capacity building without any follow-up activity? Is this not a misuse of time and energy? Public figures have expressed their concerns:

We cannot wait anymore for these issues to be discussed in workshops and conferences, and in committees without visible results. Today we need to act. Let us overcome the inertia, remove the obstacles, target the objectives, set the calendar of actions, and keep to the schedule

President Paul Biya in his speech to the nation, 31 December 2007

During her recent field visit to Baka communities near Lobeke National Park, the United States Ambassador to Cameroon stated that *'We must now link conservation with social development'*.



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