

# THE RIGHTS OF BAKA COMMUNITIES IN THE REDD+ NGOYLA-MINTOM PROJECT IN CAMEROON

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The Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) is a strategic coalition comprised of international, regional, and community organizations engaged in development, research and conservation to advance forest tenure, policy and market reforms globally.

The mission of the Rights and Resources Initiative is to support local communities' and Indigenous Peoples' struggles against poverty and marginalization by promoting greater global commitment and action towards policy, market and legal reforms that secure their rights to own, control, and benefit from natural resources, especially land and forests. RRI is coordinated by the Rights and Resources Group, a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C. For more information, please visit [www.rightsandresources.org](http://www.rightsandresources.org).

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# Contents

<b>5</b>	<b>INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS IN THE FORESTS OF CAMEROON</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>REDD/REDD+ IN CAMEROON</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>REDD+ NGOYLA MINTOM PILOT PROJECT/ BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS EVALUATION</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>VERIFICATION THAT FPIC HAS BEEN OBTAINED</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>IMPACT ANALYSIS</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>RECOMMANDATIONS</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>ANNEX 1</b>

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*...carbon is seen by cash-strapped states in Africa as a source of foreign exchange, allowing a new economic value of forest resources to be unlocked and deployed for economic growth under the sovereign control of the state. For donors and non-governmental organisations, carbon allows a new round of ‘missionary’ development activity, as projects aim to rescue local ecosystems and livelihoods now claimed to be suffering from and contributing to the impacts of global change. ”*

- Leach and Scoones, 2015<sup>1</sup>

“

*If the purpose of the REDD project in the Ngoyla-Mintom forest is to foster the sustainable management of forest ecosystems in order to stabilise forest cover and reduce carbon emissions while taking into consideration development needs within the forest, the Baka living in the project area believe that they have a role to play in this process if, and only if, their consent is taken into account. ”*

- Association Okani, 2011<sup>2</sup>

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1. Leach M. and Scoones I. Eds. (2015) Carbon Conflicts and Forest Landscapes in Africa. Earthscan, Routledge.

2. Association OKANI, 2011. Rapport de sensibilisation et d'information des communautés Baka sur le projet REDD du WWF dans la zone de Ngoyla-Mintom.

# 1. Indigenous peoples' rights in the forests of Cameroon

Of the indigenous hunter-gatherer peoples of Cameroon (the peoples who self-identify as 'autochthonous'), the Baka are the largest group, numbering about 40,000 and living in an area of 75,000 km<sup>2</sup> in the south-west of the country; the Bagyeli/Bokola are the second-largest group with approximately 3,700 people living near the coast in an area of about 12,000 km<sup>2</sup>; and the third-largest group are the Bedzang who live in the forests north-west of Mbam (Ngambe-Tikar), in the Central Region.

These three groups comprise 0.4% of Cameroon's total population. Some Baka and Bagyeli are still able to move around to harvest forest resources and then exchange them at the roadside, but many of them have been largely excluded from their traditional forest resources and live in a state of extreme marginalisation along the roadside.<sup>3</sup>

However, Cameroon is signatory to a number of international declarations which give explicit emphasis to the rights of indigenous peoples. Furthermore, one fundamental precondition to any REDD+ intervention is the inclusion of communities' customary rights. Whether it be a REDD+ project, a conservation project, sales of standing volume or concessions, the project promoters and/or investors have to comply with the relevant international legal instruments applicable to Cameroon, particularly since Cameroon's constitution states that the international laws to which Cameroon is party supersede domestic law, even when the rights they grant are different or in addition to those under domestic law.

For example, with regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and in relation to other international laws and agreements applying to Cameroon (e.g. Decision VII/28 of COP 7):

1. all peoples who have demonstrable collective land rights by virtue of customary law have collective rights to their customary lands and resources, including the rights to land ownership
2. communities of distinct peoples who manage their lands collectively according to customary law and with strong cultural ties to their lands, territories and natural resources have the legal right to grant or refuse their consent with regard to decisions affecting these lands and resources.

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3. Nnah and Mantzel (2014) Deforestation, REDD and Takamanda National Park in Cameroon – a Case Study. Forest Peoples Programme.

## 2. REDD/REDD+ in Cameroon

Originally suggested by the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), REDD was welcomed by Cameroon in 2005 having been presented by the international community as an opportunity to contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions and to finance sustainable development nationally.

Following the submission in 2008 of a Readiness Plan Idea Note (R-PIN) compiled by WWF, MINEPDED<sup>4</sup> and ONF International, a series of 9 REDD pilot projects was launched at sub-national level, supported by donors, conservation NGOs and the private carbon credit sector.

These projects focused primarily on the areas surrounding the large national parks. By contrast, from the outset, the Ngoyla-Mintom project took a more ambitious 'landscape' approach extending across a vast area of forest in the Dja River basin with a view to creating a new IUCN Category I protected area.

In 2011, in its review of the preparatory processes for REDD in Cameroon<sup>5</sup>, Forest Peoples Programme identified major shortcomings with regard to the inclusion of indigenous peoples' and local communities' rights in the national policies and initiatives underway, including those involving the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). In particular, the analysis highlights the projects' lack of transparency; lack of genuine participation by local communities; failure to respect Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and failure to develop procedures to incorporate FPIC in the projects in progress; confusion over carbon ownership rights (which, more often than not, appear to be allocated to the State); and the failure to respect customary land rights.

*«Indigenous forest communities point out that their presence has helped to protect the forest, and that REDD can only work if it is based on securing their rights (rather than overriding their rights) to their customary forests.»<sup>6</sup>*

Despite the proliferation of 'pilot' activities, it was only in June 2012 that a Management Committee was set up by order of the Prime Minister to ensure consistency in and coordination of the REDD and REDD+ activities. The Technical Secretariat was established within MINEPDED, the principal Focal Point with regard to climate change. In 2013 Cameroon presented its REDD+ Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP), and June 2014 saw the start of a three-year programme to prepare a REDD+ National Strategy. In October 2015, despite the fact that there was not even a draft of this strategy, Cameroon's REDD Coordination submitted its Emissions Reduction Program Idea Note (ER-PIN) to the 13th session of the FCPF with the aim of being selected as an FCPF recipient.

The national Community Forest Platform and international NGOs, including Forest Peoples Programme, produced a detailed critique of the draft ER-PIN, in particular highlighting: a lack of credible analysis of the drivers of deforestation and degradation; inadequate consideration of indigenous and local communities' rights in the preparation and implementation of REDD+ projects; the primary focus being on subsistence agriculture ('low-hanging fruit') instead of recognising the role played by mining, logging and agri-business in deforestation; the disproportionate emphasis on large-scale emissions reduction when compared with the rate of industrial development being pursued in areas of dense vegetation; a weak participatory process for the inclusion of civil society in the preparation of the ER-PIN; confusion between ministries over the allocation of land; and the risks inherent in using Annual Forest Royalties (AFR – la Redevance Forestière Annuelle) as the means of benefit-sharing, without taking into consideration the analyses and case studies of the corruption and elite capture of the AFR and their negative impacts on poverty.

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4. Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development, entitled MINEP (Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection) until 2012.

5. Freudenthal E., Nhah S. et Kenrick J. (2011) REDD and Rights in Cameroon: a review of the treatment of indigenous peoples and local communities in policies and projects. Rights, Forests and Climate Briefing Series.

6. Ibid.

At the 13th session, despite 7 other ER-PINs being selected, the FCPF rejected Cameroon's ER-PIN (which can be resubmitted at the end of 2016) on the grounds of lack of analysis and proof with regard to carbon emissions, but made no reference to human rights, obtaining FPIC or social safeguards in the context of REDD+ in Cameroon.

### 3. REDD+ Ngoyla-Mintom pilot project

The REDD+ Ngoyla-Mintom pilot project and its two components, WWF Cameroon-European Union (EU) and Global Environment Facility (GEF) – Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), will impact on the land rights and livelihoods of approximately 10,200 people, 30% of which are Baka indigenous hunter-gatherer-farmer communities and 70% are Bantu farming communities. These peoples are distributed across numerous hamlets and villages in the project zone, which has an area of over 700,000 hectares. The area is characterised by its cover of dense rainforest, within the 'great forest' of south-west Cameroon.

In addition to the REDD+ and biodiversity conservation projects (the Dja Wildlife Reserve and the Nki National Park), this region is under pressure from numerous external sources, principally: exploration activities; prospecting and mining (gold, cement and iron); a railway construction project to transport ore from the Camiron mine at Mbalam 500 km to the Atlantic coast at Kribi; development of the cross-border rail network between Cameroon, Gabon and the Republic of Congo; industrial logging in the FMUs (Forest Management Units which cover approximately 45% of the project area) and sales of standing volume, as well as immigration linked to these activities.

In the context of this industrial development, strengthening the land rights of the local peoples (Bantu and Baka) is a priority to ensure that they continue to have access to the forests and to subsistence agriculture.

### 4. Background and objectives of this evaluation

The Operational Guidelines for Obtaining FPIC in REDD+ Initiatives in Cameroon, approved in 2014, stipulate that following initial implementation of the actions agreed between the project promoters and the communities in the original agreements, monitoring and evaluation of the FPIC process should be carried out by a neutral, independent third-party organisation specialised in the interrelationships.

The aim of this evaluation is to open up a space in which to reflect on respecting communities' rights in the REDD+ processes and help generate a participative analysis of the impacts of the REDD+ Ngoyla-Mintom pilot project on these communities.

This work takes as its starting point the principles, criteria and indicators established by the working group on Operational Guidelines for Obtaining FPIC, of which the four principles are:

**Principle 1:** Absence of force, pressure, unwanted obligation, manipulation and intimidation.

**Principle 2:** Provision of information regarding REDD+ activities sufficiently in advance.

**Principle 3:** Disclosure of the full information about the REDD+ activity.

**Principle 4:** Community agreement or approval of proposed REDD+ activity.

Through and beyond the process for obtaining FPIC, the evaluation examines how the agreements are functioning; the extent of participation in the monitoring and decision-making bodies, and in the sociological and gender components; mechanisms for benefit-sharing; and other acknowledged or potential impacts on the rights of the communities as identified by the promoters and/or communities.

The evaluation also draws on the base data gathered during the community consultations for the Scoping Study (September 2014) undertaken as part of the EU-FPP-OKANI project:<sup>7</sup> *Legitimate decision-making and effective representation of the indigenous forest peoples of Cameroon.*



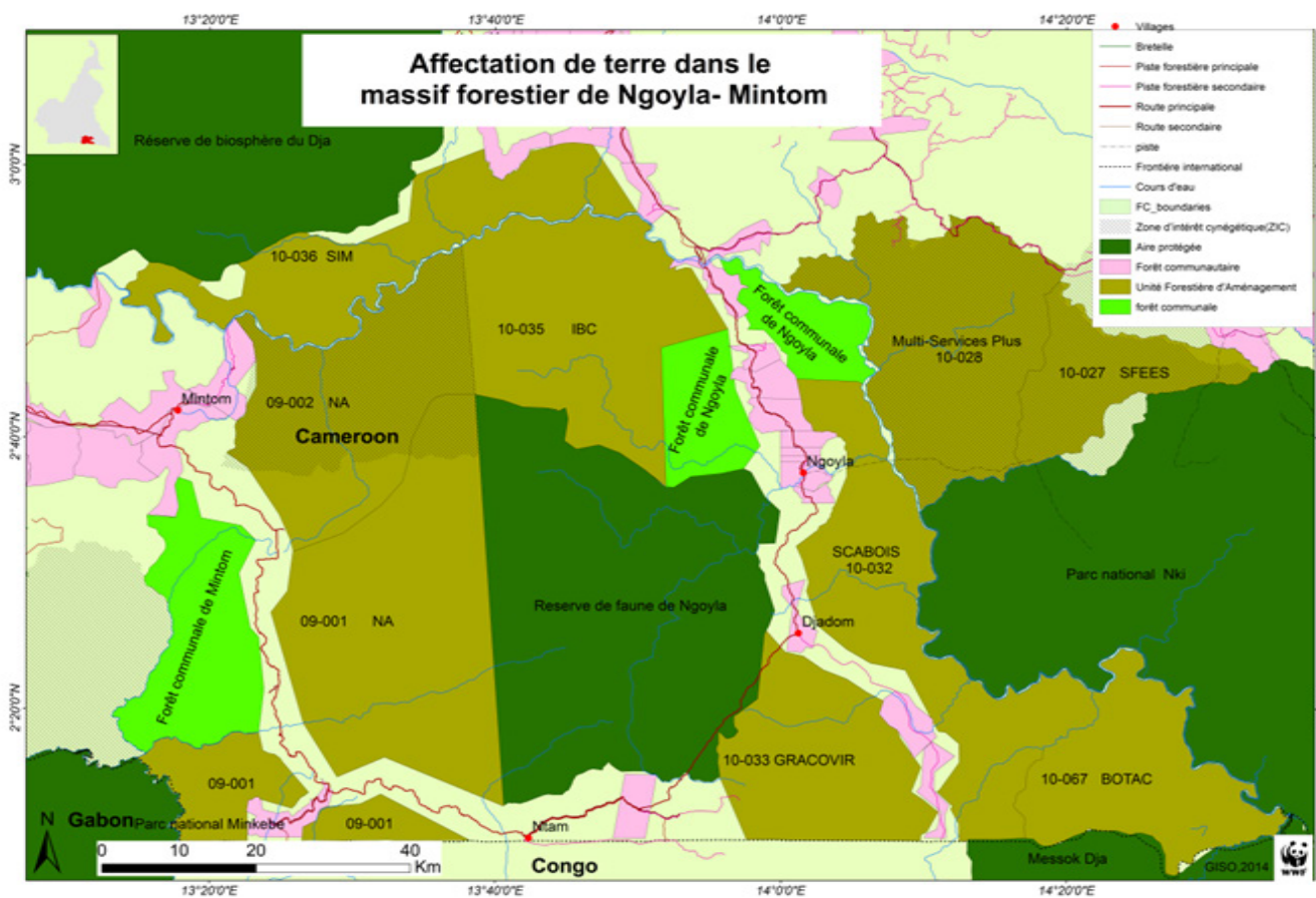
**The river Dja**

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7. The observations and recommendations given here are those of FPP and OKANI, and not the European Union.



Map 1. Area covered by the WWF Cameroon-EU REDD+ project (the main river is the Dja)



Map 2. Land use in the Ngoyla-Mintom forest in 2014 (source: WWF Cameroon), showing the reclassification of FMUs and the expansion of the agro-forestry strip supported by WWF Cameroon as part of their REDD+ project.

- **WWF-European Union REDD+ Project**

**Title of the action:** Reducing deforestation and degradation in Ngoyla-Mintom forest block (N-M) through the implementation of sustainable integrated management in the Tri-National landscape Dja – Odzala – Minkebe (TRIDOM)

**Specific objective:** Biodiversity conservation and to safeguard and maintain carbon stocks in the N-M forest block through the implementation of land-use planning and integrated and participatory sustainable management to ensure equitable benefit-sharing for the local and indigenous populations.

**Time period:** 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2017

**Funding:** EU (83%), and WWF Netherlands and USAID/CARPE (17%)

**Budget (to March 2016):** EUR 3,125,000

**Project offices:** Djoum and Ngoyla

- **GEF-MINFOF Project**

**Specific objective:** The PDO is to improve the conservation and management of core areas within the Ngoyla Mintom forest massif and improve access to income-generating activities for local communities.

**Components:** (1) strengthen government and civil society capacity for participatory planning and management of the core areas that are proposed for conservation and low impact community use; (2) design and implement a livelihood support mechanism; (3) design and implement a long-term monitoring and evaluation system for the Ngoyla-Mintom forest massif.

**Time period:** 11 April 2013 – 30 June 2017

**Funding:** Global Environment Facility and Government of Cameroon (contribution in kind)

**Budget:** USD 5,573,000 (GEF contribution = USD 3,500,000)

**Project offices:** Yaoundé

**Box 1. Principal components of the REDD+ Ngoyla-Mintom project**

## 5. Methodology

The evaluation was based on verifying the procedures used to obtain FPIC, according to the verification methods for the different components of FPIC as set out in the Operational Guidelines, including analysis of project documentation and reports pertinent to meetings or workshops, annual activity plans, information notices posted in population centres, and presentations and training materials prepared and used by the promoter. Furthermore, we met the promoters of the WWF-EU project and have also tried to speak to the promoters of the GEF project (no reply received to several emails sent to the project's management unit) to enable them to offer their views on the inclusion of the rights and needs of Baka communities in their activities.

In parallel with the documentary verification process and in order to undertake the participative analysis, the team organised:

1. A series of meetings with the communities or their designated representatives in order to complement the elements under investigation;
2. A discussion forum with the community members, which took into account the different sociological and geographical components, and with the purpose of developing a collective position (see Annexe 1). The forum took place on 27 and 28 December 2015 at Assoumindélé with the participation of 15 representatives (5 women and 10 men), all representative members of the Land, territory and resources thematic group from the villages of Assoumindélé, Ntam, Mabam, Ndimako, Akonetie, Limabé, Makamekouma and Seh.

We offer our sincere thanks to the members of the Baka community as well as the representatives and facilitators from the following Baka organisations who participated in the meetings held in their communities:

ABAWONI (Association des Baka de Mintom) – Zoulabot community

ABAGUENI (Association des Baka de Mintom – côté Lele) – Limabe and Akonetie communities

ASBAK (Association des Baka de Lomié) – Assoumindélé, Seh, Mabam, Lelen and Ndimako communities

## 6. Verification that FPIC has been obtained

### **The requirement that FPIC should be obtained has not been met**

The WWF and GEF project meetings generally included the Bantu, were conducted in French, Bulu or Ndjem but not in Baka, and took place in the chieftaincies and only very rarely in Baka villages, apart from some brief conversations and taking a few photographs. On the other hand, in 2013, WWF worked from time to time with ASBAK to collaborate on the classification of FMUs, and on those occasions the meetings in the Baka communities were held with Baka facilitators.

In the numerous cases where the meetings were not conducted in the indigenous language as expected in the Operational Guidelines, the faithfulness of the translation and the translator's perspective, particularly when French is used (a language which the Baka have little command of), is critical. The Scoping Study has already emphasised the need to communicate in Baka during consultations, and to use translators known to the communities and whom they trust.

Only in the case of Assoumindélé II did the community state that information had been brought to them in advance by WWF. In every other case, the Baka were reliant on their Bantu neighbours to inform them of meetings.

The meetings did not take the traditional calendar into account. Nor did the project promoters respect the sociological component by ensuring that Baka women participated. In one case, the women said that only a few of them had participated when the sous-préfet was in Akonetie for a presentation about community forests.

In Zoulabot, the project promoters were invited to come and present their results but they do not come as far as the communities. However, it is sometimes the case that the promoters approach organisations to distribute information and this is a step forward. Nonetheless, the thematic representatives should also integrate into each community and, as appropriate (for information sharing or for consultations) organise meetings in Baka villages.

On the other hand, in all of the communities, there is confusion between the GEF and WWF projects, which is further heightened when the project promoters make joint presentations.

Consequently, the Baka communities do not feel well informed about the REDD projects' activities on their customary lands and are unaware of their right to FPIC and to refuse their consent.

**Reference to FPIC in the EU-WWF project document:**

In the context of this action, WWF will support the implementation of a specific consultation process for the indigenous Baka communities in order to take into account their livelihoods, which are heavily dependent on hunting and gathering in the depths of extensive areas of forest, as well as the marginalisation that they are victims of. This process is based on the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent as enshrined in a variety of international instruments such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the relevant provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Apart from the need to train all the members of the implementation team (including the different administrative authorities involved) on the relevant national and international texts and their application, the specific tasks to be performed within the action will be generated from the 12-stage criteria for establishing the principle of free, prior and informed consent. WWF will work in partnership with specialist UN organisations such as the ILO and the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa to benefit from their advice and technical assistance. WWF will also collaborate with le *Réseau Recherche Actions Concertées Pygmée* (RACOPY), the umbrella network of the organisations and projects working to promote and protect the rights of the indigenous (Pygmy) peoples, to enable the exchange of experience.

Certain tasks, such as sensitisation and the formation of *Comités Paysans Forêts* (CPF) in the indigenous communities, will be delegated to indigenous peoples' intermediary organisations (OKANI, ASBAK and the *Association des Baka de l'Arrondissement de Mintom*).

## 7. Impact analysis

### Land-use plan: hunting, fishing and gathering in the FMUs?

The allocation of FMUs 009-001 and 009-002 in 2014 (see also Map 2 which predates these allocations) proved a shock for the promoters of the REDD+ project in that the entire forest block was until then, in principle, available for a carbon credit compensation programme on the basis of avoided deforestation and degradation.

With the support of WWF, the GEF-MINFOF project had, however, succeeded in preventing logging in an FMU allocated to the Ngoyla Wildlife Reserve (156,000 hectares).

During the consultation process on the allocation of FMUs, the Baka requested, in writing:<sup>8</sup>

1. An equitable share of the income from logging;
2. That the State and the loggers recognise the neighbouring populations' usage rights within the FMUs;
3. That the loggers respect the Baka's sacred sites and involve the Baka in demarcation of these sites;
4. That the Baka be involved in all FMU allocation processes;
5. That 3rd-class chiefdoms be established to enable the Baka villages to be recognised and receive their share of the annual forest royalties.

WWF's officials say that they bring pressure to bear on MINFOF to ensure customary rights in forest concessions but community testimony indicates otherwise. The communities are seeing their access to the forest and their traditional resources restricted by ecoguard patrols (confiscation of traps and game, beatings, being stopped for questioning), degradation of the forest itself by commercial loggers and poachers, and by mining activities:

**"The ancestors were free to move about.  
We do not understand this dividing-up of the forest"**  
- Seh

**"God created the forest for the Baka and the Baka go into  
the forest to take what they need, without destroying it.  
We, the Baka, have no use for this dividing-up of the forest"**  
- Assoumindélé II

**"The Baka are not responsible for the forest's destruction.  
The Baka only go to remove what they need. It's the others, with  
their economic visions, who are coming and doing the destroying"**  
- Assoumindélé II

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8. Letter of 15/08/2013 to MINFOF signed by the Baka community representative, Daniel Mognago

**“WWF have told us to stop harvesting nuts and wild mangoes,  
that they’re only for the animals”**

- Limabe

**“We’re tired of the lies”**

- Akonetie, comments directed to all the external actors

### **Community forests and the agro-forestry strip: participatory sustainable management of natural resources for the Baka?**

With regard to the land-use and micro-zoning process, the WWF team have succeeded in securing enlargement of the agro-forestry strip, to 5 km either side of the road in the Mbalam II – Ntam zone, opening up the potential for development of community forestry and the possibility of securing land rights for the indigenous communities.<sup>9</sup>

Community forestry is well under way in the Ngoyla area where all the forests are mixed community forests under the control of Bantu chiefdoms or Bantu forest communities. In many of the Baka villages, the Baka themselves were not invited to the exploratory sessions prior to the community forest application being sent to MINFOF. In Limabe, it was only through the intervention of the Bantu chief that a Baka was included in the exploratory team. However, the Baka in Akonetie feel frustrated by a community forest proposal which does not include areas for fishing and other important gathering activities – no Baka was invited to the exploratory session.

A key question, which we have repeatedly asked WWF is ‘who benefits from mixed community forests?’.

In Ndimako, WWF officials say they have urged the community to participate in the Etekessang community forest, but we consider that the participation process needs to be accompanied by permanent and sympathetic support for the Baka, given the social power dynamics. The Ndimako community feel excluded from the community forest allocation process and their sole involvement is hauling wood for the Bantus.

From our discussions with the Ngoyla-Mintom project promoters and the country director of WWF Cameroon, it would appear that the shock doctrine prevails as justification for the hurried consultation processes with the Baka in Ngoyla-Mintom which do not respect the Operational Guidelines on FPIC but are justified on the basis of hypothetical urgency:

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9. For example, in neither Cameroon nor Gabon is there formal and equal recognition of customary tenure under national property laws – rather, the State is considered the owner of “empty” forest lands under customary occupation, with the result that communities are subject to dispossession (with minimal or no compensation) for government-led or –sanctioned projects. Cameroon has a long, if chequered, history of community forestry. Having been introduced under the 1994 Forest Law – by far the earliest incorporation of community forestry by any central African country – by 2011 community forestry had grown to include 182 community forests, totalling nearly a million hectares. While a million hectares may appear significant, in fact less than 5% of forests in Cameroon are reserved for communities, despite high population densities in forested areas.

Existing laws in Cameroon and Gabon provide, in theory, for community forestry with some opportunity for community level resource management. But in reality, in neither country is community forestry concomitant with customary tenure, nor does it provide real security of tenure. Moreover, communities in both Cameroon and Gabon face significant, and sometimes insurmountable, challenges in accessing and successfully managing community forest areas – because of capacity gaps, continuing administrative inaccessibility, legal obstacles and market failures. Cameroon is currently undertaking reforms of its forestry and property laws, although the shape of reforms that will be proposed remains unknown.

**“You could sit and wait forever for the Baka to understand. And in the meantime, the State is giving out logging permits”**

- Senior staff member, WWF Cameroon

The option of exclusively indigenous community forests should be pursued where mixed community forests governed by MINFOF overlap customary Baka land. This is the case in Assoumindélé, Ntam and Seh where the proposed indigenous community forest totally ignores the indigenous peoples' traditional use of the land as well as WWF's Statement of Principles, which includes:

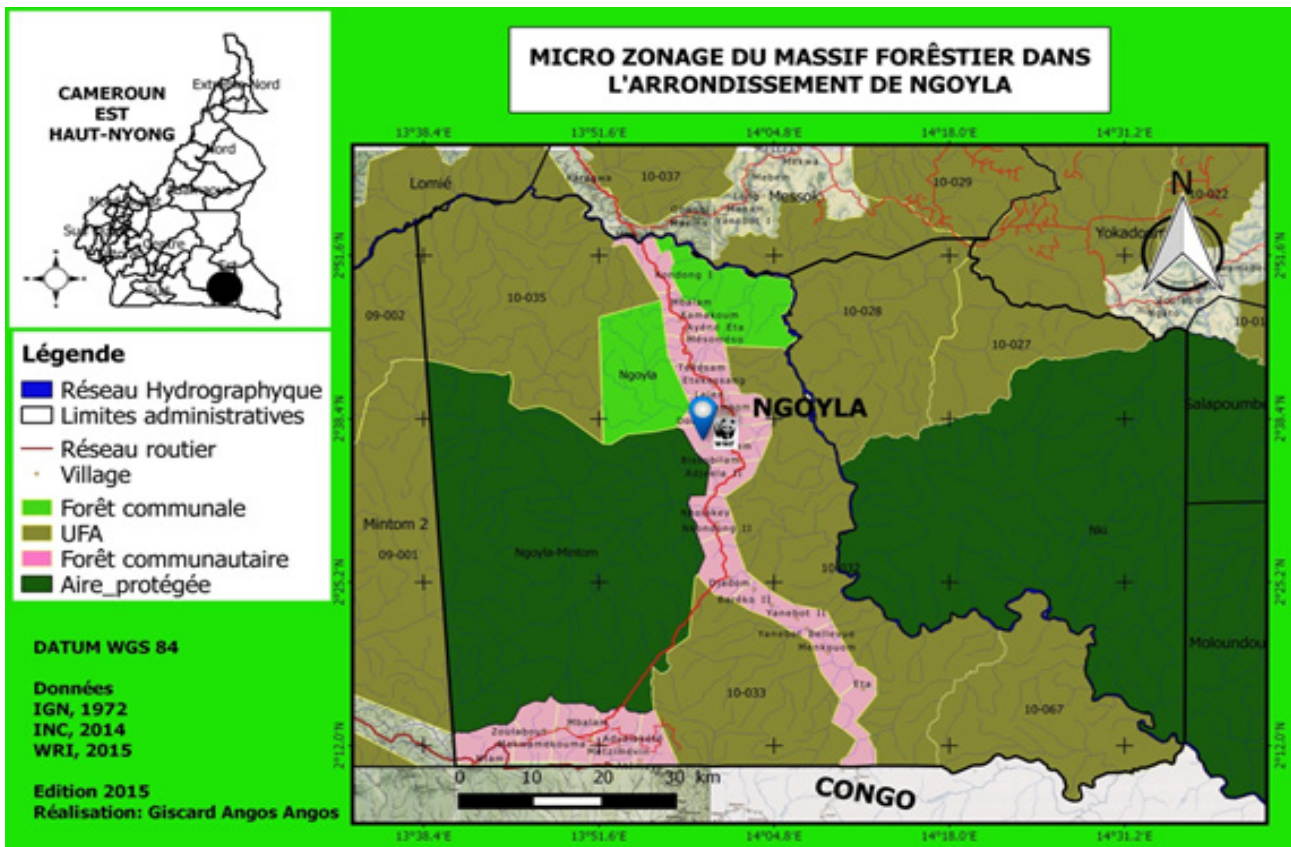
1. Principle 12 which recognises that indigenous peoples have the right to determine priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands, territories, and other resources, including the right to require that States obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting those lands, territories, and resources;
2. Principle 13 which provides that WWF recognises and supports the rights of indigenous peoples to improve the quality of their lives, and to benefit directly and equitably from the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources within their territories;
3. Principle 14 which stipulates that in instances where multiple local groups claim rights to resources in indigenous territories, WWF recognises the primary rights of indigenous peoples based on historical claims and long-term presence, with due regard for the rights and welfare of other legitimate stakeholders;
4. Principle 24 which establishes the principle of seeking out, identifying and consulting legitimate representatives where there are claims of indigenous peoples' customary rights, and the principle of information sharing on an ongoing basis;
5. Principle 27 stipulates that in instances where states or other stakeholders, including long-term residents, contest the rights of indigenous peoples, WWF will be ready to assist indigenous peoples to protect, through legally accepted mechanisms, their natural resource base, consistent with the achievement of WWF's Mission and subject to availability of resources;
6. Principle 32, in which WWF encourages and promotes cooperation with other organisations in the promotion of the basic rights and the customary resource rights of indigenous peoples, as well as providing them with all available information.

WWF is now beginning to consult the communities about community forestry on the Mintom side and the first sensitisation report confirms that the concept of community forests for indigenous peoples on indigenous land is belatedly beginning to be promoted, in the language of the consultations at least:

*'In the Odoumou-Assok and Mengom communities the communication and sensitisation team stressed the need to secure an area of community forest for the Baka communities living there. The camps at Odoumou and Assok, for example, are inhabited exclusively by indigenous peoples, hence the need to retain a community forest component there.'* [Unofficial translation]<sup>10</sup>

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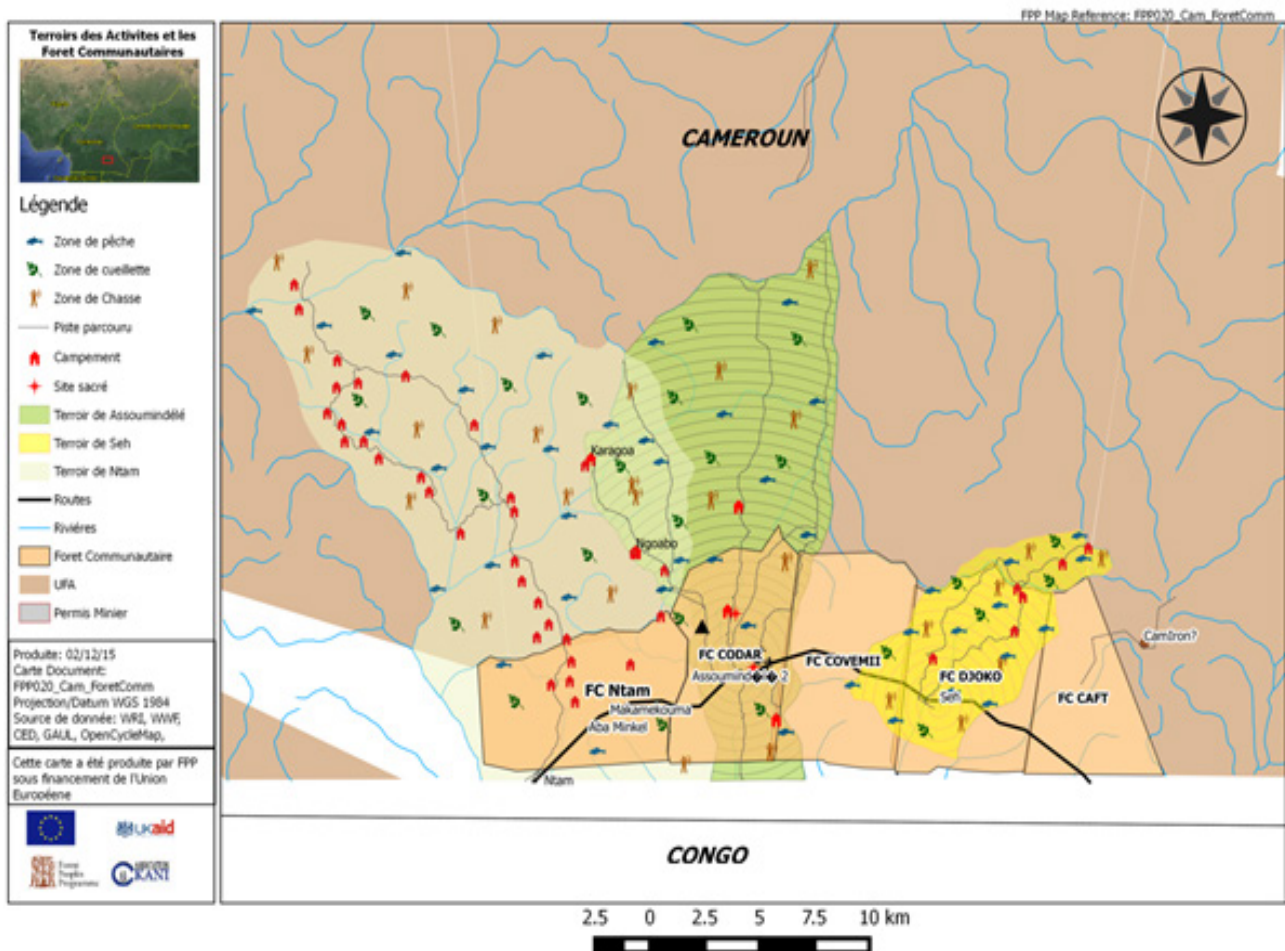
10. Extract from WWF report, November 2015: CLIP en vue de la mise en place des initiatives de Forêt Communautaires dans la zone agroforestière entre Mintom et Mengom



Map 3. Micro-zoning - the community forests that are planned or already in operation in the Ngoyla and Mbalam-Ntam agro-forestry strips are shown in pink.



Community forest logging in the Ngoyla district using mobile circular saws and manual haulage.



**Map 4. Community forest superimposed on the Mbalam II - Ntam agro-forestry strip as proposed by WWF and CAFT (Coopérative agroforestière de la Trinationale - Trinational Agroforestry**

Map 4 shows that the DJOKO and CAFT community forest projects (which would be one or perhaps two of the exclusively Baka community forests) do not correspond with Baka customary lands at Ntam, Aba Minkel or Assoumindélé II, but the DJOKO community forest overlaps the Seh customary lands, whereas the CAFT community forest is directly adjacent to the site of the Cam Iron mine.

Over and above the thematic topic of community forestry, the communities interviewed in the agro-forestry strip were confronted with a paternalistic and negative attitude on the part of the project promoters. This is all the more surprising given that no causality between slash-and-burn agriculture (practised by low density population groups) and deforestation and degradation has been demonstrated in the TRIDOM, other factors being far more significant and proven.

**“The WWF have told us that they do not want to see Baka outside the 5 km boundary of the agro-forestry strip. They say: if we see you there, you will be imprisoned or even killed”**

- Limabe

**“The WWF have told us to stop clearing land for cultivation but our crops don’t grow in the shade and it’s dangerous to leave cover for snakes“**

- Akonetie

11. IUCN 2014 Les facteurs de déforestation et de dégradation des forêts: résultats d’une analyse participative dans les paysages TNS et TRIDOM (Cameroun, Congo, Gabon et RCA)

**“Some people came by one day to say they would come back and provide training on how to clear land without destroying the forest, but they never returned”**

- Limabe

### **Socio-economic development: Income-generating activities and basic infrastructure**

The GEF–MINFOF project has allocated FCFA 150 million for the Baka projects (30% of the total IGAs (Income-generating activities) of FCFA 500 million) of which 50% of the beneficiaries have to be women. The objective is to improve the livelihoods of 5% of the population in the area (500 people) and the infrastructure of a further 5% (500 people), affecting approximately 1,000 beneficiaries. In GEF’s latest activity report, of July 2015, there was not one beneficiary of the infrastructure project and only 7 Baka out of 71 beneficiaries of the total target of 500 (10% of the beneficiaries despite their 30% share of the population).

In the Bantu communities, a great deal of visibility has been given to several pilot projects on the outskirts of the largest centres, such as Ngoyla and Ntam, primarily pig farms and agriculture. In the Baka communities, no development is visible nor is any reported by the communities.



**Signs publicising micro-projects in Ntam (left) and Ngoyla (right)**

Despite the approaches made by GEF's and WWF's promoters to identify the communities' infrastructure needs, the communities interviewed expressed great frustration at seeing no progress in the infrastructure projects nor the socio-economic community development. In Assoumindélé II, the community needs a new school, and a health centre, and improved housing and drinking water (due to contaminated water sources). A huge community effort has already been wasted on the development of a fisheries project (unrelated to the REDD+ projects) which, in technical terms, was poorly conceived from the outset, with an inoperable anti-gravity filling system.



**Dilapidated school in Assoumindélé II which ought to be able to house a hundred children**

	FGFA	%
Income generating activities	75,000,000	50
Basic infrastructure	60,000,000	40
Capacity building	15,000,000	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150,000,000</b>	<b>100</b>

**Box 2. Allocation of funding for the Baka by GEF micro-project (source: GEF project document)**

	FCFA max. by community	% of total budget allocated by GEF in the 2014–16 investment plan
<b>INCOME-GENERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Agriculture	5,000,000	34%
Livestock	3,000,000	8%
Fish farming	2,000,000	3%
Fishing	3,000,000	5%
NTFP operations	2,000,000	3%
Craftwork	1,000,000	1%
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b>		
Construction/rehabilitation of basic social infrastructures	18,000,000	40%
Development or construction of water supply	5,000,000	
Development of basic social infrastructure	5,000,000	
Production infrastructure	5,000,000	
<b>CAPACITY BUILDING</b>		6%

**Box 3. Funding limits by income-generating activity and percentage of investment plan (source: GEF project document)**

In Zoulabot, the Baka requested help with the cocoa plantation, a fund to enable them to centralise NTFPs for resale (there was also mention by a representative from the Ministry of Agriculture of a shelling machine) and they helped clear some land at Mintom for a building for the secondary school but three years on, nothing has happened on this site. They were unaware of the deadline of 20 October 2015 for the submission of micro-projects to GEF, which indicates that they had not been properly made aware of this. The ABAWONI facilitators had begun a list of people interested in cocoa plantations following a training session in Mintom to which several representatives had been invited to participate.<sup>12</sup> The Baka had also understood that the lack of a Common Initiative Group would restrict their ability to participate in micro-projects but the micro-project documents state the opposite.

In Limabe, it was only the chief who was interested in pig farming, whereas the community had asked for fish farming and cocoa plantations. They had also requested a well. In several Baka communities, promotion of pig farms had been strongly criticised because of the impact that an activity requiring a permanent presence would have on the traditional Baka lifestyle. Some stated that they did not like eating meat that had been raised in enclosures or villages, nor did they like goats.

**“We prefer the traditional chickens and wild pigs from the forest”**

- Akonetie

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12. At the beginning of November 2015, the community received a contract for a cocoa plantation micro-project, to be signed on the basis of expressions of interest gathered by ABAWONI facilitators in Mebem 1, Mebem 2, Assok, Akom, Odomou and Belleville.

To sum up, with regard to IGAs, the Baka find themselves forced to accept non-traditional activities and those they do not want for fear of losing funding set aside for them. The distribution of IGAs in the investment plan reflects a lack of prior consultation about the indigenous communities' needs, given the low percentage allocated to traditional activities (see Box 2). With regard to the basic social infrastructure-building, GEF has diverted community effort into projects that have, so far, failed to materialise and in consequence has lost all integrity in the eyes of the indigenous peoples. These peoples, with the support of sympathetic NGOs, are continuing to claim their share of the funds allocated to infrastructural improvements.

## 8. Recommendations

With the support of the Baka communities who participated in this evaluation, we urge the REDD project promoters to reinforce their work by taking the following steps in the final phase of their respective projects:

1. Self-determination: present all available options during community consultations so that the Baka can evaluate them without being put under external pressure;
2. FPIC: recognise that a community can refuse their consent without, however, implying that they refuse the support of the project promoters; recognise that FPIC is in itself a process for ensuring that indigenous peoples' rights are respected, and that these rights should clearly be a priority in all conservation processes;
3. Guarantee profits from community forestry: promote Baka community forests which overlap Baka customary lands and contribute to securing land rights; ensure that the Baka receive their equal share from the management of mixed community forests; involve the Baka in all the processes for the creation of Baka and/or mixed community forests;
4. Access to FMUs: carry out advocacy amongst loggers and the authorities for the Baka to have free access for fishing, hunting, and traditional gathering, and raise awareness among ecoguards about customary use of resources;
5. IGAs: ensure that the IGAs selected meet the needs identified by the Baka communities.

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*They hunt for survival, they hunt to eat. Animal lovers may shed a tear or be outraged. When you experience at close quarters the daily hardship of these men, you feel relieved when they manage to get something other than roots, honeycombs or grubs to eat. May hunting first be forbidden to those for whom it is not a need. ”*<sup>13</sup>

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13. Dhellemmes R.P. 1985. Le Père des Pygmées. Flammarion.

# Annex 1

## INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' POSITION PAPER ON CLIMATE AND REDD+ INITIATIVES IN THE NGOYLA-MINTOM AREA

Assoumindélé, 28th December 2015

We, the Baka of the Ngoyla-Mintom area, gathered together as a consortium of representatives of the Lands, Territories and Resources thematic grouping of the EU-FPP-OKANI project, and coming from the following villages of: Assoumindélé, Ntam, Mabam, Ndimako, Akonétsé, Limabé, Makamekouma, Seh.

Gathered at Assoumindélé on the 28th December 2015 for a consultation on the inclusion of indigenous peoples' rights in REDD+ initiatives in the Ngoyla-Mintom area, as part of a gathering of communities' perspectives on how their rights were taken into account in the on-going REDD+ initiatives in the area,

1. Conscious of the recognised services provided by the Ngoyla-Mintom forest massif, an integral part of the Congo Basin's global climate stabilising function;
2. Recognising the historic role and collective responsibilities of indigenous peoples, the Baka, in the conservation of the forest ecosystems of Ngoyla-Mintom through their traditional and environmentally sensitive practices;
3. Conscious of indigenous peoples' great vulnerability to the damaging effects of climate change, in particular the loss of livelihoods and of their cultural, religious and spiritual identity;
4. Concerned that traditional forests will be used to barter in international climate agreement negotiations, preventing indigenous peoples from maintaining their traditional forest management practices and using transhumance corridors (pastures, traditional rites and ceremonies, harvesting of non-timber forest products, medicinal plants,...);
5. Recognising the international community's efforts to ensure our subsistence in time and space;
6. Considering the issues at stake and the unprecedented mobilisation around COP21 as well as the potential consequences of its decisions on the future of the Congo Basin forests;

### Recommend the following:

1. Indigenous peoples' participation in the processes of elaborating and validating national climate contributions to be submitted to the national REDD+ committee; these should take into account our proposals and integrate us with dignity into the different procedures through participation of our representatives on the committee.
2. The need for the negotiations to take into account those non-carbon services offered by the Ngoyla-Mintom forest, in particular ecosystem services, local knowledge and indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge around forest conversation.
3. That the climate agreement be rapidly translated into action and include Baka communities in its implementation, while respecting our rights.

4. The climate agreement adopted in Paris and the national REDD+ policies and strategies developed in Cameroon must recognise, protect and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples in line with the requirements of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In particular:

- The principle of Free, Prior, Informed Consent (FPIC) of indigenous peoples;
- Access by indigenous peoples to and equitable sharing of the multiple advantages and benefits of REDD+;
- Respect for social and environmental safeguards linked to REDD+.

5. The financing mechanisms for current REDD+ initiatives in the area must take into account the specific needs of indigenous peoples in relation to adaptation and mitigation activities.

Signed in Assoumindélé, 28th December 2015

The Participants





