

CENTRAL AFRICAN REGIONAL PROGRAM FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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#2 — What Is CARPE? The Central African Regional Program for the Environment

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Key Concepts

- Supporting institutions and individuals that seek to reconcile conflicting uses of the forests of Central Africa is critical to ensuring that present and future stakeholders, both within and outside the region, are able to share equitably in the benefits that accrue from the forest.
- Empowering local communities to participate in civil society institutions and providing local government with the powers and resources to manage forest resources are critical to counter-balancing the centralized powers of the public and private sectors and a key to sustainable management of the forest estate.
- Given the importance of the logging sector as a forest land-use in Central African nations, it is critical to identify and promote policies to maximize revenues generated from logging while minimizing adverse environmental and sociocultural impacts.
- Making environmental information freely available to the public sector and civil society will remove a barrier to sustainable resource management in Central Africa.
- Given the pace of socioeconomic change in the region, it is critical to ensure that, during the slow but progressive development of processes for equitable land-use decision making, options to capture future values of the forest are not foreclosed.

What is CARPE?

The Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) is a USAID-supported initiative to identify and help establish the conditions and practices required to reduce deforestation and biodiversity loss in the Congo Basin. The expanded knowledge base and enhanced individual and institutional capacity that result from the implementation of the first phase of CARPE will serve as the essential foundation for a longer-term (15-20 years) effort to sustainably manage forest resources, thus conserving the region's biodiversity and averting potentially negative changes in regional and global climate. Project activities are focused on Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and São Tomé e Príncipe.

Within USAID, CARPE is unique in that it is being designed and implemented by U.S.-based government and nongovernmental organizations, all with experience in the region. These organizations are African Wildlife Foundation, Biodiversity Support Program, Conservation International, Innovative Resources Management, NASA, University of Maryland, United States Forest Service, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Peace Corps, University of Virginia, Wildlife Conservation Society, World Resources Institute, and World Wildlife Fund. The Biodiversity Support Program, a USAID-funded analysis and strategic planning program, has played a lead role in CARPE design and implementation.

CARPE's core philosophy is to facilitate the meaningful involvement of African partners and to ensure that African decision makers have access to, and the capacity to use, information critical to rational forest resource management. CARPE has engaged local NGOs, individuals, and government agencies in activities to evaluate threats to forest integrity and identify opportunities for minimizing resource degradation while promoting human livelihood security.

Early in the process, a field office in Libreville, Gabon, and later Focal Point offices in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and Kinshasa, DRC, were set up to ensure effective communication among U.S.-based and Congo Basin partners, to help coordinate CARPE activities within the region, and to take the lead on implementing selected capacity-building activities.

What Is the CARPE Perspective on Forest Management?

The forests of Central Africa are valuable to the residents of the region and to the entire world for many reasons. If a given area of forest could simultaneously generate all such values, then managing the forest would not be a challenge. Unfortunately, a land-use that captures one value tends to undermine or preclude land-uses that would capture other values. For example, a forested landscape converted to coffee to generate income for families and national governments may no longer be a forest filled with food or medicines that can be harvested for local use or for

sale. A forest where wildlife are hunted for meat generates food and income for families today, but may jeopardize the chances of future families from capturing the same values. A forest set aside as a national park is no longer accessible to loggers to harvest and sell the trees and to provide a source of employment.

“Deciding what areas of forest to use to generate which values, for whom, over what time frame is a complex sociopolitical process and one that is evolving in Central Africa.”

Deciding what areas of forest to use to generate which values, for whom, over what time frame is a complex sociopolitical process and one that is evolving in Central Africa. Over the first five years of the project, CARPE has become eminently aware that the forests of the region have multiple values, that land-uses to capture these values often conflict with one another, and that the sociopolitical processes to reconcile these conflicts have yet to become fully established in the region.

Consequently, CARPE is focusing its efforts on (1) seeking ways to nurture this nascent and evolving process for rationalizing and legitimizing conflicting uses of the forest and (2) helping to ensure that, during this evolving process, the full range of forest use options are kept open.

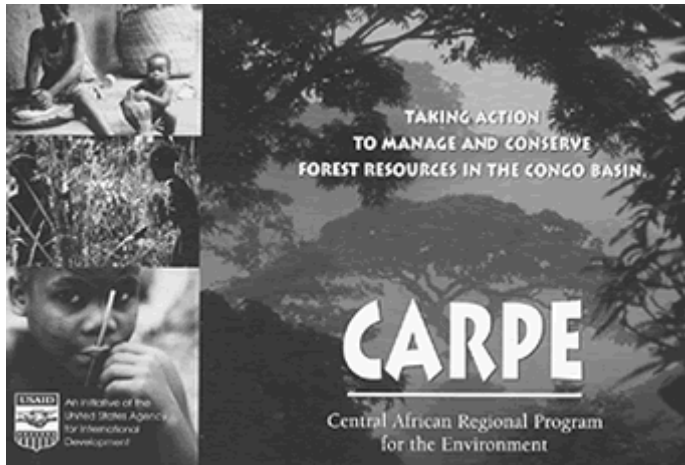
Next Steps

The next steps for CARPE focus on environmental governance, community-level natural resource management, logging sector environmental performance, and protected area management.

Environmental Governance

Concentration of forest management in the hands of a national urban elite and a few logging companies, neither of which are accountable to the citizenry, has resulted in considerable inequity in benefit sharing from forest resource exploitation, low compliance with forest management laws, and unsustainable forest use. Furthermore, strong executive powers and absence of civil-suit provisions undermine citizen participation in forest use decisions and oversight.

Building and maintaining support of local and national public sector and civil society institutions that seek to reconcile forest use conflicts are critical to the long-term conservation of the forests of Central Africa. Moreover, empowering rural households to participate in civil society groups and coalitions will help counter-balance the power of the public and private sectors and help leverage more transparent, representative, and accountable systems for allocating and regulating forest resource uses in Central Africa. To that end, CARPE will continue its support of the CEFDHAC process, Yaoundé Head of State Summit Process, Global Forest Watch, NGO and resource manager capacity building, and community-based forest management.



A widely disseminated brochure on CARPE gives readers a good overview of the program's goals and activities. More information is readily available at the CARPE Web site at <http://carpe.umd.edu>.

Community-Level Resource Management

Some level of community involvement is necessary for any resource management initiative, particularly when the resources are important to local economies and when state law enforcement capacity is weak. Though community-based conservation has been seen to be effective in other parts of Africa and the world, empowering local communities to demand greater legal participation in management of the forest estate is still in its infancy in Central Africa. CARPE will continue to facilitate participatory action research to help determine the range of forest resource management roles and responsibilities that communities can assume, that would make more equitable their share of forest benefits and relieve pressure on government to regulate resource use across the whole forest estate. Helping rural households build and participate in civil society groups and coalitions concerned with leveraging more transparent, representative, and accountable systems for allocating and regulating forest resource uses is a necessary step to more sustainable management of the forest estate in Central Africa.

Logging Sector Environmental Performance

Logging is, and over the next 20 years will continue to be, the most significant source of forest-based revenue throughout most of Central Africa. Moreover, logging companies are the de facto managers of most of the remaining relatively intact blocks of forest outside of protected areas; they have a key role to play in ensuring that logging practices do not unnecessarily impact the quality and abundance of forest resources. Given the importance of the logging sector in the region as both a source of local and national income and as a primary agent of forest degradation or conservation, CARPE will continue to test and document the economic and environmental impacts of logging sector policy reforms in the region, explore ways to encourage logging companies to adopt reduced-impact logging practices that address wildlife conservation within concessions, complete and test a Geographic Information System (GIS) model of logging

revenues based on forest inventory, road quality, and log price data in Cameroon, and undertake NGO training on concession performance monitoring.

Protected Area Management

The value placed on forests in Central Africa by the majority of local, national, and international interest groups is an economic value and land uses that capture that value typically if not always undermine the biodiversity conservation values preferred by the minority. Until effective and equitable forest governance mechanisms are in place in Central Africa, short-term economic values of the forest are likely to take precedence over longer-term, more intangible values. As the majority favors economic land-uses that reduce biodiversity, it is not surprising that the land set aside for less-desired intangible values is small relative to that “zoned” for economic use. As a result, biodiversity is at risk both because areas “zoned” are too small and land uses in economic zones undermine conservation.

Protected areas are critical for biodiversity conservation. Parks and reserves provide large mammals with safe havens without which they would be in direct competition with humans for space and resources — a fight they would undoubtedly lose. Plant and animal species that are threatened elsewhere by commercial exploitation, or by conversion of habitat to other land uses such as agriculture, are ensured, within protected areas, of a place to grow, reproduce, and evolve. In Central Africa, like other regions of the world, as populations grow and economies expand, wild habitats will progressively be converted to anthropogenic land uses. Protected areas will increasingly become the principal bastions of forest resource conservation, because only within protected areas is biodiversity conservation the primary land use.

To ensure that short-term expediency does not foreclose options to capture future values of the forest it is essential to maintain investment in a network of protected areas that contain viable assemblages of forest plants and animals representative of the region. To that end, CARPE will continue to help ensure that reservoirs of forest plants and animals are maintained and to promote land-use practices in zones around and between these reservoirs and across national borders that minimize adverse environmental and social impacts.

CARPE...What Is It?

Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE)

Launched in 1995, the *Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE)* engages African NGOs, research and educational organizations, private-sector consultants, and government agencies in evaluating threats to forest integrity in the Congo Basin and in identifying opportunities to sustainably manage the region’s vast forests for the benefit of Africans and the world. CARPE’s members are helping to provide African decision makers with the information they will need to make well-informed choices about forest use in the future. BSP has assumed the role of "air traffic controller" for CARPE’s African partners. Participating

countries include Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and São Tomé e Príncipe.

Web site:

<http://carpe.umd.edu>

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