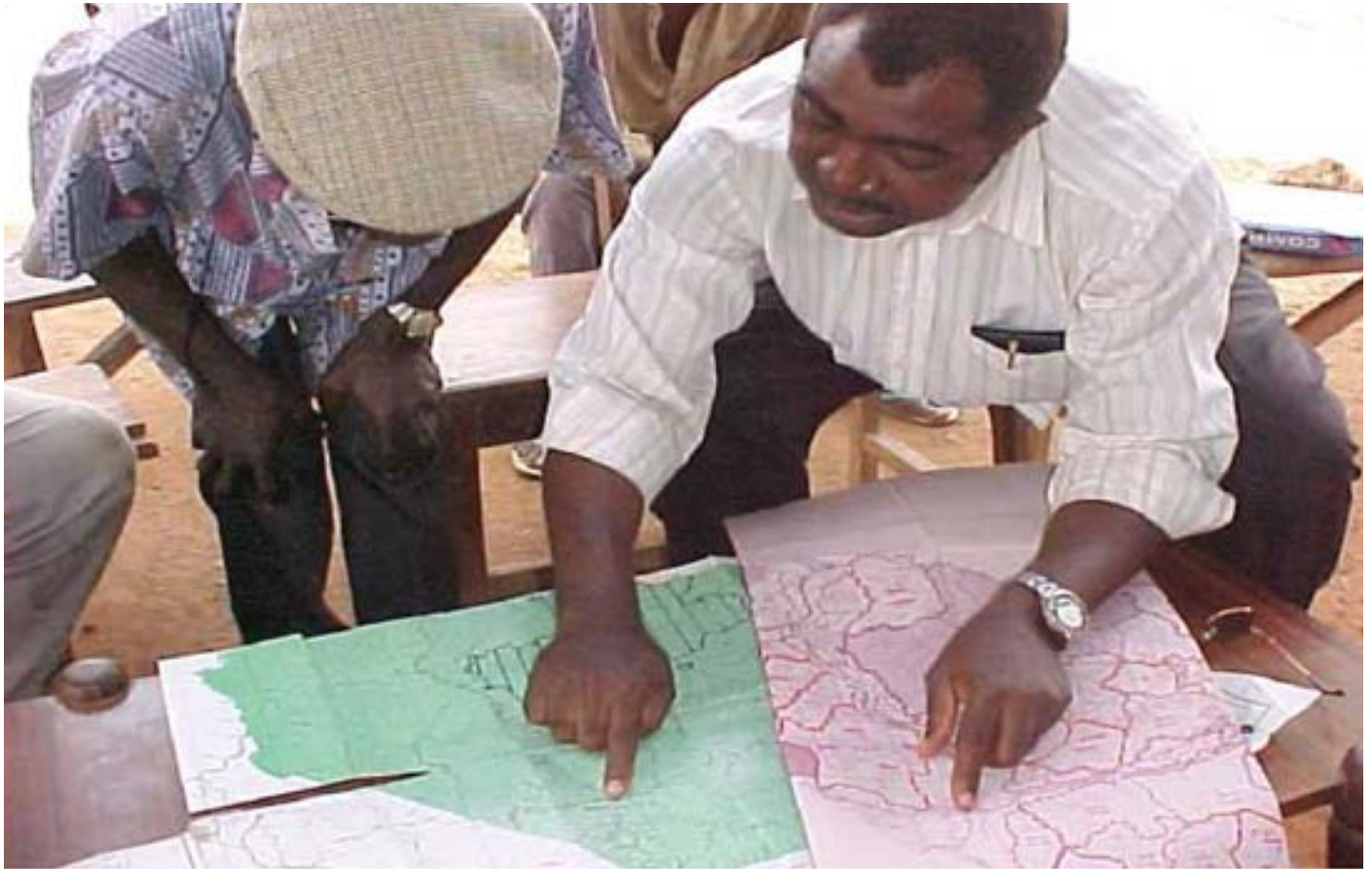


## Case Study 2 - Protected Areas Land Use Planning : Lessons Learned from the Lobéké National Park

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### Introduction

This paper describes the land-use planning process of the Lobéké National Park situated in the south-east corner of the Republic of Cameroon. The park covers 217,850 ha of forests and is part of the Tri-national de la Sangha (Sangha Tri-National) TNS Landscape. The paper highlights the biological significance of the Lobéké National Park and its rich biodiversity which has attracted several logging companies, sport hunting outfits, parrot trappers and commercial bushmeat hunters. The scramble over natural resources in Lobéké by the different user groups, including local communities, has contributed to stakeholders' ongoing conflicts over the ownership and exploitation of the resources. The land-use planning process for Lobéké, given the complexity of sta-

keholders and high population of Baka pygmy indigenous forest peoples, was carried out in order to ensure the protection of the rights of this ethnic group as well as addressing the interests of Bantu communities and other stakeholders. One of the objectives of land-use planning for the protected area was to ensure that the ecological integrity of the forest ecosystems in the area is maintained while promoting sustainable natural resource use in surrounding buffer zones. The participatory management process that led to the designation of core protected areas and surrounding resource use zones was coordinated by the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) in collaboration with WWF, the German Development Corporation – GTZ, and the local government administration. One of the basic principles that guided consultations was that conservation of

natural resources in the area can only be achieved with the support and participation of all stakeholders. The USAID/CARPE programme provided significant funds to support the land-use planning process in the Lobéké National Park including the establishment of various consultative platforms with different stakeholder groups.

## Overview of the Lobéké National Park

The Lobéké Forest National Park and its peripheral zones are of outstanding conservation interest for a multitude of reasons. For example, the area supports unusually high densities of forest mammals, particularly so-called “charismatic megafauna” such as Forest elephants (*Loxodonta africana cyclotis*), Western lowland gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*), Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*), Bongos (*Tregalaphus euryceros*) and Forest buffaloes (*Syncerus caffer manus*). Sizeable populations of animal species internationally recognized as endangered still thrive in the forest, although they are increasingly threatened by unsustainable exploitation of timber and by hunting of bushmeat. Moreover, the park includes a significant proportion of primary forest, one of the few remaining unlogged forest areas in this particular region thus giving an opportunity to preserve the biodiversity of a rapidly degrading habitat. Protection of the Lobéké forest ecosystem also provides a notable and complementary addition to Cameroon’s protected area system.

At the international level, the Lobéké National Park is contiguous with protected areas in both the Central African Republic (Dzanga-Ndoki National Park) and the Republic of Congo (Nouabale-Ndoki National Park), and consequently there is a unique opportunity for a tri-national conservation programme fully developed under the CARPE programme and the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP). Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the forests of the Lobéké National Park and its peripheries provide the basis for the way of life of two particular groups of Cameroonian people, the Baka and the Bangando. Both rely heavily on the forest for food, medicine, building materials and cultural identity, yet their environment and hence their livelihoods are severely threatened by the detrimental activities of

outsiders whose arrival is facilitated by commercial logging. Indeed, while it is recognized that commercial activities such as timber exploitation and safari hunting have an important role to play in the local and national economy, it is vital that specific areas of south-eastern Cameroon are officially recognized by government for their intrinsic conservation value as protected areas while others are designated as multiple-use zones for sustainable exploitation and revenue generation. Lobéké National Park covers 217,850 ha of forests. The surrounding multiple-use zones consist of six community hunting zones with an estimated size of 487,600 ha, seven safari hunting concessions (738,100 ha), six community forests (30,000 ha) and 14 forest management units owned by logging companies (UFAs) covering 911,454 ha (see Figure 1 below). The total area of the Lobéké tri-national segment that comprises the national park and the surrounding use zones is 1,470,799 ha. The overall area of the TNS Landscape including the core protected areas is 3,713,800 ha.

The size of the park, including the surrounding multiple-use zones with several stakeholders,

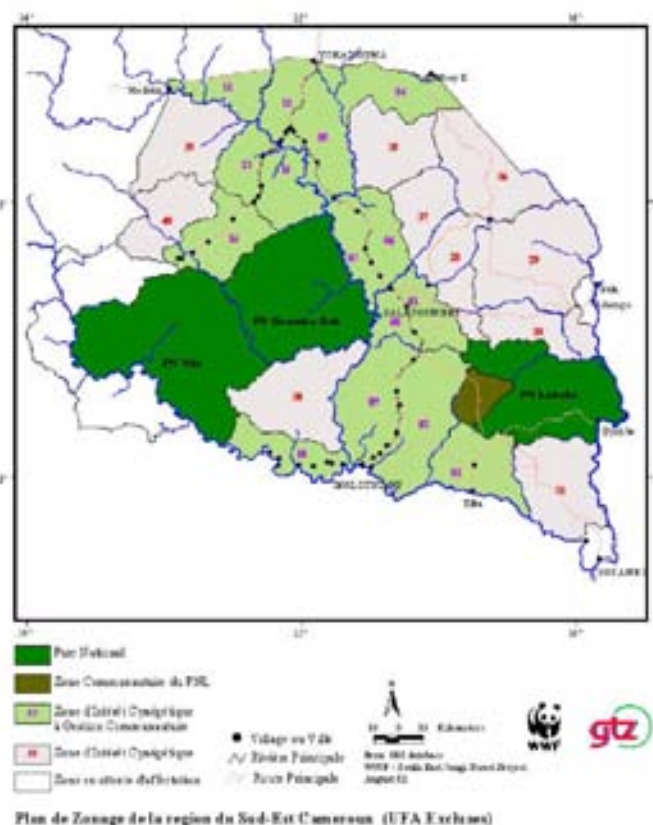


Figure 1. Zoning map of the south-east Cameroon region (excluding UFA?????)

obviously creates an environment for potential conflicts. The conflicting and multiple land-use options and rights, as well as the diversity of stakeholders, have created a complex management challenge in Lobéké.

It is against this background that WWF, in collaboration with technical partners including notably GTZ, worked with MINFOF to establish a technical consultative committee to coordinate negotiations with different stakeholders including the local government administration. The committee was established after the completion of various biological and socio-economic studies that provided baseline data on key management aspects such as proposed park boundaries and multiple-use zones, key threats to biodiversity, potential alternative income-generating options and other important data on the demographics and social dynamics of the area.

## Initial context

Conservation of the biological diversity in the Lobéké National Park, as in most of the Congo Basin, is challenging given the broad spectrum of interests and problems notably the bushmeat trade, commercial logging, mining and other illegal operations. Weak administrative institutions, ill-adapted forestry laws, poor governance structures and the abject poverty of surrounding local communities adds another layer to the existing pile of conservation problems in the region.

According to Cameroon forestry law, the forest is divided into two main categories of land tenure: permanent and non-permanent forest areas. Generally, the permanent forest areas include protected areas and legalized forest concessions where no human settlements are allowed although there are illegal settlements observed in certain forest concessions. The non-permanent forest areas allow community resource-use zones and agro-forestry zones. Human settlements and other activities such as farming are allowed within non-permanent forest areas.

Until the mid 1980s, very little biological data describing biodiversity potentials and threats existed for Lobéké forests. Subsequently, conservation organizations such as WWF and WCS have car-

ried out a series of studies that highlighted the conservation importance of the area including threats mainly from unsustainable commercial logging, poaching and bushmeat trade that seriously threatened the rich wildlife and biodiversity in the area. Most of the biological and socio-economic studies were funded through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and GTZ. These studies provided critical management information to discuss future management options in Lobéké. These included data and information on demographic trends with Bantu and Baka pygmy populations, lists of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) with potential economic value for local communities, proposed core conservation areas, and potential use zones with due consideration of areas used by local people, especially Baka pygmies.

The prevailing situation in Lobéké prior to the work of conservation organizations could best be described as chaotic. There was an absence of law enforcement, disenfranchised local communities, absolute power and ownership over certain resources by influential stakeholders notably logging and safari hunting companies; wide scale corruption of local authorities including mayors and government forest administrations engineered by the private sector; abuse of rights and no recognition of indigenous forest people's communities. This lawless situation also encouraged poaching, bushmeat trade, illegal parrot trapping, cross-border hunting and an influx of arms and ammunitions.

Despite the confused situation on the ground and numerous conservation challenges, WWF and other conservation partners were determined to assist the government of Cameroon in creating a national park in the Lobéké Forest. The technical partners were also determined to establish a co-management system whereby different land-use types would be delimited and approved by the government in consultation with all local stakeholders. The motivation of conservation organizations to embark on this arduous process was reinforced by the scientific knowledge of the rich biodiversity of the area following several years of studies.



## Methodology used for land-use planning

### The development of a land-use plan for the Lobéké National Park

The land-use plan (LUP) provides the broad management guidelines concerning approved activities allowed in a particular land-use type. This document is jointly approved by the government administration and the local stakeholders. The purpose of the consultative process is to address problems related to ownership and access rights, and also to help define the responsibilities of the local forestry administration and other specific stakeholders to manage the national park and its immediate peripheral zones with local stakeholders.

In the 1990s, WWF, in collaboration with the Government of Cameroon and other conservation NGOs, and with the financial support of the WWF Network, GEF and GTZ, initiated wildlife inventories in the Lobéké forests with a special focus on large mammal inventories. These inventories assessed the abundance and distribution of mega-fauna species such as elephants, gorillas, Chimpanzees, Forest buffaloes and forest antelopes. Another focus of the studies was on the assessment of various threats to biodiversity from logging, poaching and the bushmeat trade. The results of these surveys revealed a high conservation value in the area, with some of the highest densities ever recorded for Forest elephants and Lowland gorillas in the Congo basin.

Building on the results of these studies and subsequent recommendations, a consultative committee was established in 1998 comprising WWF, GTZ, MINFOF and the local government administration. The committee was headed by the Sub-Divisional Officer (Sous-préfet) with the MINFOF Divisional Delegate as the Secretary. The committee reported to a Divisional supervisory commission chaired by the Senior Divisional Officer (Préfet) of the Boumba Bek and Ngoko Division. The main objective of the local consultative committee was to facilitate negotiations with villages and stakeholders for the ap-

proval of the proposed national park and surrounding multiple-use zones. The participatory land-use planning process was developed and initiated by the Divisional delegation in charge of Forests and Wildlife, MINFOF, with the participation of a multi-disciplinary team that included representatives of the local administration, local council, guardians of public opinion such as local parliamentarians, WWF and GTZ and was guided by the following vision statement :

*Sustainable management of natural resources in Southeast Cameroon is ensured through participatory management practices involving all stakeholders and contributes to improving the living conditions of local people.*

The local consultative committee held meetings in all the villages to discuss the proposed boundaries of the national park, community hunting zones, logging and safari hunting zones, especially those adjacent to or overlapping with village farmlands and forests. Village meetings were co-chaired by the village chief and the sous-préfet. Illustrative maps were produced from biological and socio-economic data and other maps were generated from rural participatory mapping processes involving guided discussions with local people. The consultative meetings allowed villagers to make proposals on either adjustments or acceptance of proposed areas for the different land-use types (national park, community forests, and safari and logging zones). Once an agreement was reached with each group of stakeholders, the minutes of the meeting were read in public prior to being signed by a designated stakeholder representative and the head of the consultative committee. The village meetings allowed for a broad range of issues, in particular development problems, to be discussed with local administrative authorities. The meetings fostered communication between local authorities, conservation projects and stakeholder groups. At the end of the local consultative process, minutes of the meetings from local stakeholder consultations were presented to the Divisional supervisory commission. Following deliberations at the Divisional level, a report was sent to Yaoundé endorsing the proposed limits for the Lobéké National Park. The letter of endorsement from the Senior Divisional Officer also included a technical report describing the proposed bounda-

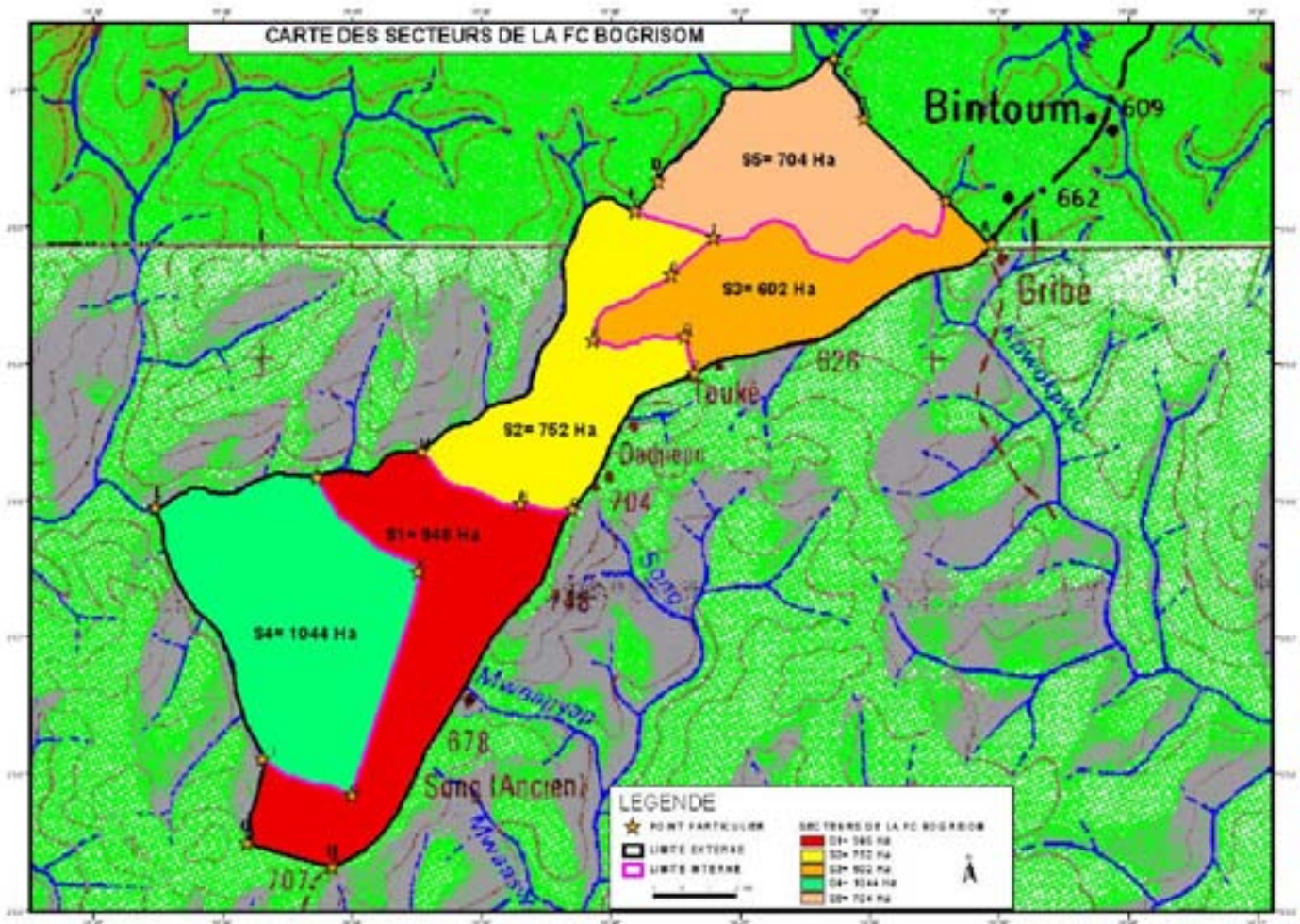


Figure 2.

ries of the national park and designated surrounding resource-use zones such as community forests, safari hunting zones and logging concessions.

According to Cameroon law, a community forest covers 5,000 ha and is directly managed by a local community that constitutes itself as a recognized legal entity. The authorized community must submit a management plan written on the basis of the results of multiple-resource inventories carried out to determine the quantity of timber species, densities of wildlife and other important NTFPs found in the designated forest. The community forest is managed by an approved local management committee with official statutory organs governing the administration of the community forest. The local community is authorized by law to exploit just 200 ha of the forest each year. Other activities include harvesting of NTFPs based on an approved list of items. Figure 2 is an example of a community forest map.

There are always stakeholders' conflicts resulting from the delimitation of use zones surrounding national parks. The conflicts are primarily due to overlaps in user rights over the given territory. For example, within the multiple-use zones around Lobéké National Park, certain safari hunting zones overlap with logging concessions and community forests. Figure 3 below presents the network of protected areas in south-east Cameroon which includes the Lobéké National Park and surrounding resource-use zones.

Conflicts of interest arise concerning access rights, ownership and the exploitation of natural resources. Unfortunately, the various users' rights such as timber exploitation and safari hunting are regulated by different laws.

Over the years, WWF and other conservation partners have been working in collaboration with the national forest administration to facilitate a



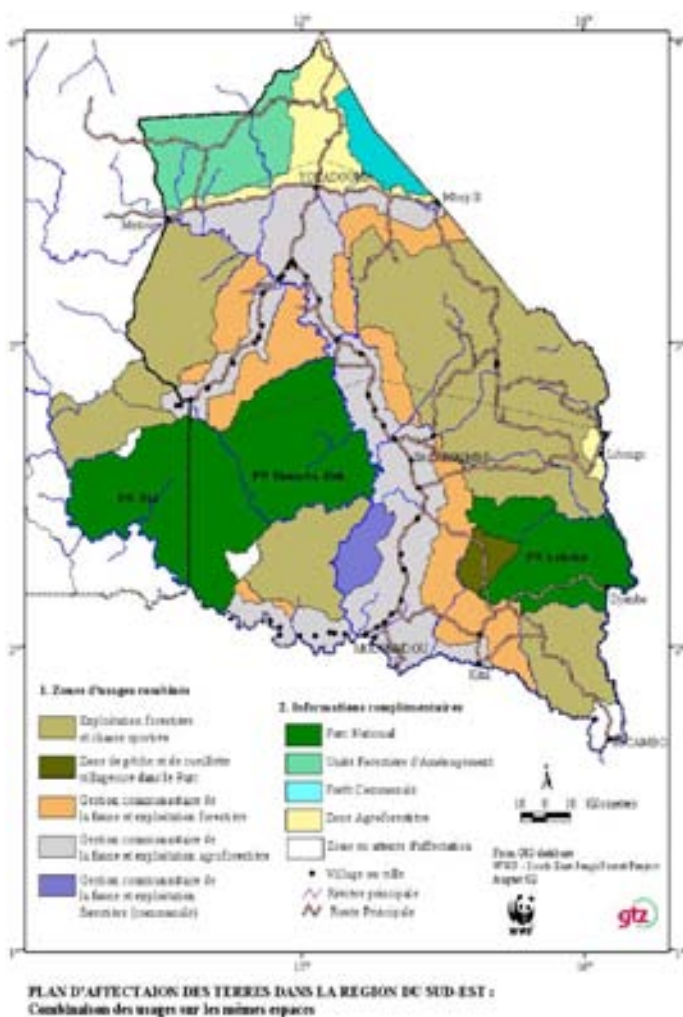


Figure 3.

dialogue among the different stakeholders. The facilitation process led to the establishment of various consultative platforms to promote dialogue and collaboration among these local actors. There has been significant progress with collaborative agreements signed by some of the stakeholders to work together in the different management zones. An example is the Mambéle Convention which was signed by logging companies, safari hunting outfits and representatives of community wildlife management zones. Some results of this convention include: i) the various stakeholders financing anti-poaching operations to combat hunting and the bushmeat trade within resource-use zones; ii) safari hunters sharing the meat of hunted species with villagers where an animal was killed; and iii) logging companies providing local communities with waste wood for fuel and other development activities.

## Negotiating use rights of local communities in the national park

During consultative meetings in villages to discuss the proposed boundaries of the Lobéké National Park, the local people, especially the Baka pygmies, made recognition of boundaries conditional upon guaranteed access to certain areas of the park. Baka pygmies frequently use some areas of the national park to harvest bush mangoes and other wild forest products. They also carry out shrimp fishing during the dry season in some of the major streams in the park. In addition, there are secret forests in the southern sector of the park that Baka pygmies visit for traditional rituals and during Jengi festivals. Jengi in Baka is “spirit of the forests”. Young men are initiated into Jengi which is a secret cult of the Baka. New members undertake a pilgrimage to some of the secret sites before the Jengi ceremony.

As a compromise, MINFOF officials and the consultative committee agreed to gazette a community use zone in the Lobéké National Park (see Figure 1 above with the olive green community use zone). This process came after a decision by national park authorities in Yaoundé whereby national wildlife laws prohibited human activities in national parks. Acceptance by the government to gazette a community use zone in the national park was an unprecedented decision in the history of protected area management in Cameroon.

This decision demonstrated the government’s commitment to engage in a people-centred conservation approach. In the negotiation process, local communities accepted that a regulatory mechanism with joint monitoring and control operations by MINFOF and representatives of management committees of community forests should be put in place to control access and activities in the proposed community use zones. Hunting was prohibited in the community forests except organized subsistent hunting targeting Class C animals listed as non-endangered species. Prohibited activities include illegal parrot trapping and the exploitation without a permit of medicinal plants. Harvesting of NTFPs must be

carried out in strict compliance with existing forestry and wildlife laws.

## Major achievements

The major achievement of the multi-stakeholder process piloted by the technical consultative committee for land-use planning process in the Lobéké National Park has been mutually beneficial to all parties by addressing the needs and interests of the different stakeholder groups. It was not possible to gazette the national park without the consent of local stakeholders especially as most of the threats to the park come from the activities of these same stakeholders in surrounding resource-use zones. One of the main strategies in the land-use planning process was to ensure the occupation of all the forest territories in the surrounding zones by legally recognized stakeholders whose activities are authorized by the forestry and wildlife authorities. The strategy was also to avoid the no-man's-lands that existed in the past which created fertile grounds for poachers, parrot trappers and other illegal activities. The land-use planning exercise also alleviated tensions and disputes among stakeholders over the ownership of land as well as the exclusive exploitation of both legally and illegally appropriated concessions. The multi-stakeholder process led to the creation of a collaborative management agreement which was signed by local communities, safari hunting companies and the forest administration. This collaborative management agreement, known as the Mambele Convention, establishes rules and responsibilities for the parties involved, and clarifies the content and geographic sphere of each stakeholder's land-use rights.

As a result of collaboration between WWF and the logging companies, three logging companies have voluntarily engaged in the certification process. Inspired by this model of partnership, other logging companies have followed suit with commitments to promote sustainable forest management.

Further, to defend their rights and more effectively manage their resources and the benefits generated from community hunting zones, local communities have organized themselves into

groups known as COVAREF (Comité de Valorisation des Ressources Fauniques – Community wildlife management committee). Between 1999 and 2005, all the COVAREFs' wildlife management activities generated about 115 million CFAF in revenues. The wildlife revenues are generated by the communities leasing out their hunting territories to sport hunters for trophy hunting. Significant incomes are generated from trophy hunting of wildlife species such as forest buffaloes and antelopes. According to existing wildlife laws, the local community receives the total amount paid as leasing fees for the territory where the hunting takes place; the government wildlife administration receives 100 percent of the trophy tax and an additional payment equalling 10 percent of the value of the trophy tax is paid to the local communities. Revenue from trophy hunting is managed by management committees whose members are elected by the villages. WWF has helped with the organizational set-up of these wildlife management committees by: i) assisting with their legalization as official management entities; ii) training members in various aspects including technical, financial and project management; iii) carrying out the wildlife inventories required to determine wildlife populations in hunting territories; iv) training in the planning and execution of micro projects; and v) facilitating dialogue and contract negotiations with sport hunting outfits. The community wildlife management committees have reinvested the income into education (building classrooms, providing scholarships to enable village children to access secondary schools and universities), health, connecting villages to electricity networks, and constructing wells for clean water.

In 2000, a collaborative agreement was signed between local communities and safari hunting outfits operating around Lobéké National Park. Some of the key points of the agreement include: a) safari hunters sharing the meat of the wildlife they kill with local communities; b) both parties especially COVAREFs jointly investing in anti-poaching operations; c) safari hunting outfits investing in development projects in villages; d) safari hunting outfits hiring staff from local villages; and e) both parties committing to resolving any conflicts through dialogue with arbitration by the government administration and park authori-

ties.

In 2002, another convention was signed between the forest administration and logging companies. Under this agreement, logging companies will invest in anti-poaching operations as well as community projects. The local wildlife management committees will jointly finance anti-poaching operations with logging companies and the forest administration. The logging companies will also allow local communities to collect waste wood from lumbering and processing sites. From 2002–2006, the Italian logging company SEFAC operating in the northern sector of Lobéké National Park invested about US\$30,000 in anti-poaching operations. The company also constructed a modern market for the surrounding population, a health centre and two primary schools with one specifically for Baka pygmies.

In 2007, three logging companies, namely SEFAC, ALPICAM and SEBC Lokomo, signed an agreement with the forest administration to financially support anti-poaching operations around Lobéké National Park. The companies agreed to make a monthly contribution of US\$300 based on an agreed work plan. In return, MINFOF will produce quarterly technical and financial reports for distribution to all parties.

In 2007, the Lobéké National Park management committee was established. Members of this committee include representatives of surrounding villages, conservators, technical partners, representative(s) of local NGOs, the local council and a representative of the local administration. This is the highest decision-making body of the park and is primarily responsible for the overall supervision of the implementation of the park management plan.

## Lessons learned

WWF and partners adopted a flexible grass roots approach in the design and implementation of the land-use planning process for the Lobéké National Park. The approach reflects the complexity of the situation in Lobéké with multiple stakeholders from different interest groups. The land-use planning process had to ensure that proposed park

boundaries were accepted by all stakeholders while also addressing natural resource ownership and use in the surrounding buffer zones. This was a delicate balancing act given that the interests of multiple groups had to be satisfied throughout the entire process. The following lessons can be drawn from the Lobéké example:

### General observations

An open and sincere dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders can lead to a land-use plan on which the boundaries of non-conflicting uses overlap. A landscape land-use planning process is more likely to succeed if stakeholders discuss how the boundaries of their non-conflicting activities can overlap, as opposed to strictly focusing on each one's exclusive land-use rights and perceived legitimacy.

### The vision and attitudes of conservation agencies

1. Landscape conservation is a science of compromises. No one group has enough power to impose rules that other stakeholders do not understand or share. Even the less powerful stakeholders remain a serious threat to biodiversity when they feel the rules are against them. In the Jengi Forest project area, conservation is a social process. A good example of how not to start the process is the authoritarian way in which the government administration began the LUP negotiation process to define the limits of the national park – in the end, they had to succumb to pressure from the local population who openly criticized the top-down approach in discussions. Most of the early meetings were boycotted by the local population as a protest against the cavalier attitude adopted by the local forest administration. All the main actors including the forest administration finally came around to this approach once an agreement was reached to work together based on the principle of mutual respect. WWF with GTZ played a key role in facilitating dialogue and restoring confidence among the stakeholders.



2. Landscape planning and management is not only a science for protected areas. The Jengi Forest project found that the security of the protected areas within a landscape depends on the resource exploitation dynamics of the buffer zones and on how stakeholder relationships are managed. A good illustration of the new engagement of logging companies is the disciplinary measures taken by the companies against workers caught hunting in their concessions or transporting bushmeat. For example, the Italian logging company SEFAC has dismissed five workers implicated in the transport of bushmeat and hunting. In addition, hunting by workers in the forest concessions adjoining the park has decreased due to the increased disciplinary measures and anti-poaching operations financed by the companies. Understandably, this is good for wildlife in the park as hunting in peripheral zones has a direct impact on wildlife populations both inside and outside the park.
  3. Landscape land-use planning is more likely to succeed when the process is led by public authorities and technically facilitated by neutral resource persons. Conservation agencies must act as technical support agencies and land-use planning and management advisers, and avoid being perceived as competitors who defend conservation against other public interests.
- for the designation and management of hunting zones.
  2. Our experience in Lobéké shows that multi-stakeholder collaborative land-use planning has the potential to overcome land-use conflicts, consolidate negotiated rights over natural resources, act as a catalyst for local collective action and establish a climate of confidence among stakeholders. Though it might be a resource-consuming and lengthy process, this approach appears to offer a long-term guarantee that the landscape LUP will be defended by the stakeholders involved who clearly see the interest in protecting and ensuring the intergenerational availability of the resources they all depend on.
  3. The landscape land-use planning methodology must be designed to address land-use conflicts strategically, secure all categories of stakeholder rights, and secure livelihoods in order to create a climate of confidence. Through this methodology, a negotiated land-use plan stands a better chance of being adhered to and implemented in a complex setting like that of the Jengi Forest project area.
  4. Engagement of public institutions at both the micro and macro levels is a precondition for successful landscape land-use planning and management.
  5. A multi-disciplinary approach based on good knowledge of the milieu by facilitator(s) potentially leads to greater efficiency and stronger engagement of stakeholders in the land-use planning process.

## Landscape land-use planning methodology

1. A bottom-up process, led by local administrative authorities and supported by conservation agencies is more likely to generate results, as opposed to the trickle-down effect of top-level decision making at the macro scale. By taking the lead in experimental community hunting and safari hunting zones in the Lobéké Forest of south-east Cameroon, the local forest administration with technical assistance from international NGOs like WWF has achieved a landmark result in Cameroon and Central Africa in general that can now serve as a model for designing nationwide procedures