

## Case Study 3 - Community-Based Natural Resource Management Land Use Planning : Lessons Learned from the Monkoto Corridor CBNRM Zone

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### Introduction

Located between the two sectors of Salonga National Park (SNP), the Monkoto Corridor has been a site of conflict between government and local communities since the 1940s when villages were moved away from their ancestral lands and closer to roads. Additional relocations occurred between 1954 and 1958 for administrative reasons associated with the planned creation of a protected area. A third series of relocations was carried out by the *Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature*<sup>1</sup> (ICCN) in 1970 when Salonga National Park was officially created (d'Huart, 1988; WCS, 2004). This history of forced movements has led to long-lasting conflict over land in the Park and the Monkoto Corridor where relocated communities were settled on the land of existing villages.

Since 1970, relations between ICCN and local

communities have continued to deteriorate due in part to problems associated with: ambiguous policies on resource use in the park and bordering rivers; declining resources outside the park; and a negative perception of anti-poaching activities. These problems, which were highlighted during socio-economic studies carried out by WCS and WWF (WCS, 2004; Colom, 2006), represent a threat to the sustainable management of community resources.

In 2006, WWF initiated its community assistance and environmental education programme in the inhabited part of the Monkoto Corridor (5,581 km<sup>2</sup>) (see Figure 1). This programme is one component of a larger initiative for the Salonga-Lukenie-Sankuru (SLS) Landscape (104,144 km<sup>2</sup>). WWF, its Consortium<sup>2</sup> and partners<sup>3</sup> are working with the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and other groups to develop, implement and monitor an integrated land-use plan

<sup>1</sup> In 1970, the Institut Zairois pour la Conservation de la Nature (IZCN)

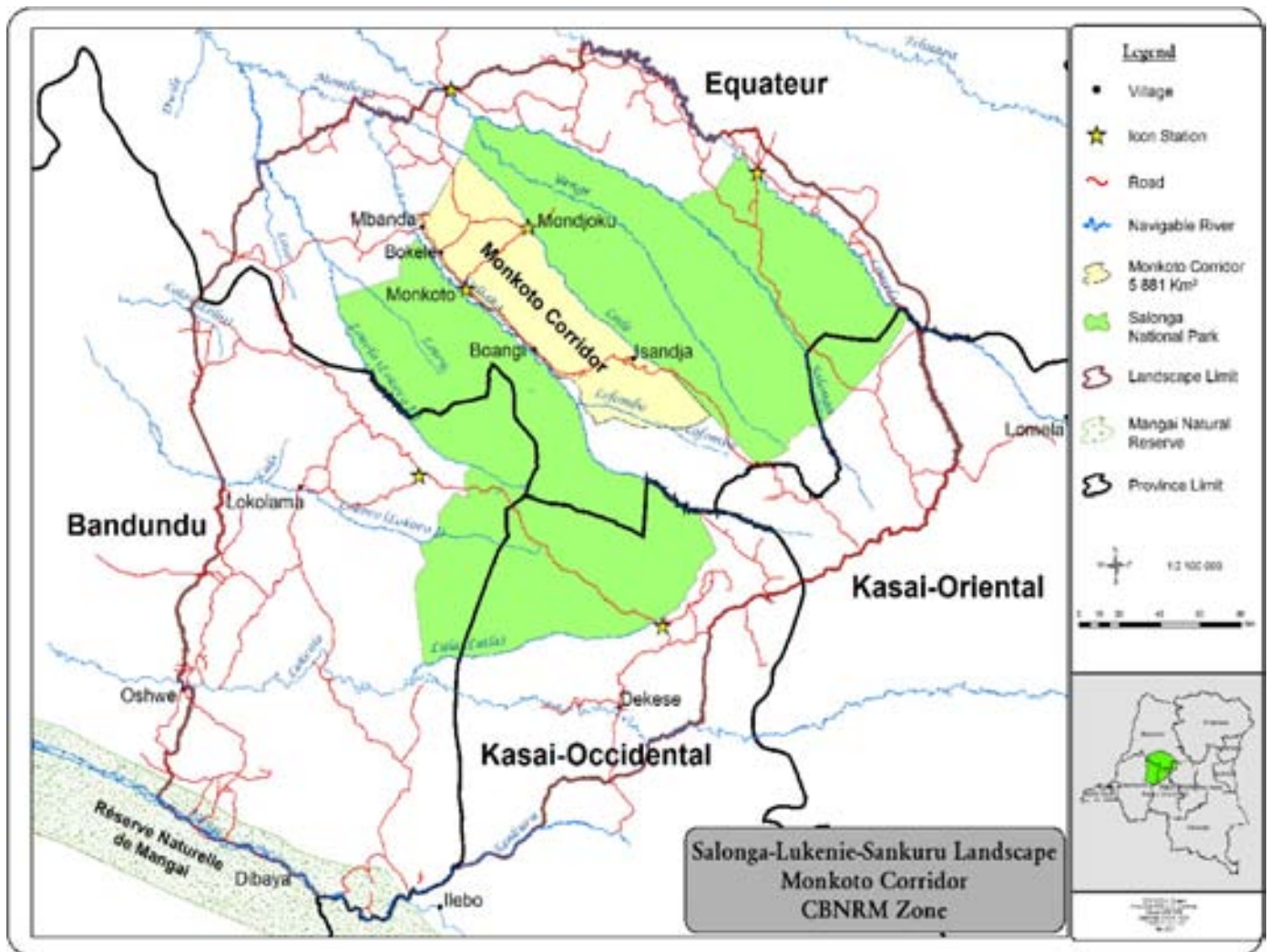


Figure 1. The Salonga-Lukenie-Sankuru Landscape and the Monkoto Corridor CBNRM zone

(LUP) for the landscape. The landscape LUP is based on the designation of different macro-zones and the development of associated management plans defining resource use and governance. Within the SLS Landscape, the inhabited part of the Monkoto Corridor is classified as a community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) zone.

The CBNRM approach is aligned with ICCN's draft "National Strategy for Community Conservation: 2007–2011". The goal of the ICCN strategy is to promote sustainable participatory management of natural resources by (1) assuring that communities are better engaged in the conservation of natural resources; and (2) promoting activities that link conservation to deve-

lopment and contribute to the improved livelihoods of communities through revenue generation.

## Physical and administrative features of the Monkoto Corridor CBNRM zone

The Monkoto Corridor is located in the Tshuapa District of Equateur Province. Both the territory and principal town within the corridor bear the name Monkoto and the CBNRM zone encompasses two sectors : Nongo and Monkoto. The corridor's limits within the SNP are delineated by two rivers – the Loile and Luilaka – which both

<sup>2</sup> Pact, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM)

<sup>3</sup> International Conservation and Education Fund (INCEF), Global Action Coalition (GACC – DRC national NGO), Institut Africain pour le Développement Economique et Social (INADES), Center for Tropical Forest Science/Smithsonian



flow in a north-westerly direction and eventually empty into the Ruki, which meets the Congo River at Mbandaka.

The corridor is critical to ICCN operations in SNP with the park's principal station located in Monkoto and a second to the east in the village of Mondjoku, on the Luile River. An absence of bridges and ferries and the degraded state of the roads limit transport within the corridor to boats on navigable rivers, motorcycles and bicycles. There is, however, an operational airfield in the town of Monkoto.

## Socio-economic characteristics of the Monkoto Corridor CBNRM zone

The majority of the Monkoto Corridor CBNRM population is Mongo (Nkundo and Mbole sub-groups) although there is one Batwa village. As throughout the landscape, subsistence and economic activities are restricted primarily to agriculture, hunting, fishing and the collection of non-timber forest products (NTFPs). However the corridor area reported more subsistence and economic activities than the rest of the landscape with a higher number of households engaged in artisanal work and commerce (Colom, 2006). Agriculture is low-yield and farmers lack access to improved cultivars, markets and knowledge of better agronomic practices.

As recently as 1997, the company ENTRIAAC (*Entreprises industrielles, agricoles et commerciales*) operated palm oil, coffee, cacao and rubber plantations in the area. While Monkoto communities speak favourably of ENTRIAAC, an estimated 80 percent of their workforce of over 1,200 workers was brought in from the Kasais. Moreover, several villages lost their land to ENTRIAAC plantations.

## Biological characteristics

The Monkoto Corridor represents an important

biological link between the two blocks of the SNP. In a recent report by a UNESCO monitoring mission<sup>4</sup> (Aveling et al., 2007), the authors recommended that a biological corridor be established between the two sectors of the park allowing for the movement of species and genetic exchange. The area south of the proposed CBNRM zone may present the best option for such a corridor.

Large mammal surveys have only been completed in a small segment of the Monkoto Corridor (WCS, 2005), south-east of the limit of the proposed CBNRM zone. WCS has initiated and will complete corridor surveys in 2008. Forest elephants and other characteristic fauna of the region are known to frequent the corridor and there have been Bonobo sightings on the periphery of the town of Monkoto.

## Legal status

The Forest Code of 2002 makes reference to (1) local community forests (*des forêts des communautés locales*) (Article 111); and (2) local community concessions (*concessions aux communautés locales*) (Article 22). There is an on-going debate over the exact definition of the two terms, which will affect the elaboration of implementing decrees. In the absence of a clear and appropriate legal mechanism for the validation of CBNRM zones, an alternative approach may be to establish "management contracts" between Monkoto Corridor communities and the appropriate legal authorities. This approach would start by obtaining recognition of the contract by local government officials and their provincial counterparts. This process should be inclusive of not only the Ministry of Environment representatives but also of other relevant ministries (e.g., rural development, agriculture, interior, mines) in order to avoid conflicting land or resource attributions.

The unique location of the Monkoto Corridor between the two blocks of the SNP heightens its ecological value. There is no legal definition for protected area buffer zones in the DRC<sup>5</sup>, however, it is likely that ICCN and the Ministry of Envi-

<sup>4</sup> SNP is a World Heritage Site

<sup>5</sup> Although there is a reference to 2–10 km in one draft decree under discussion

ronment will be willing to advocate for a form of management which encourages “community conservation”.

## Approach to CBNRM land-use planning and results

The goal of planning is to develop land use and management plans that contribute to the Strategic Objective of the CARPE programme<sup>6</sup> as well as to the desired conditions of the Landscape and the CBNRM area as determined by stakeholder groups. The methodology used in the SLS Landscape is based on guidelines provided by CARPE/USAID and the United States Forest Service (USFS). The processes and management plan components to be included in the road map or Strategy Document for CBNRM land and management plan development include :

Processes: (1) Creation of a planning team; (2) Information and data gathering plan; (3) Stakeholder participation strategy; (4) Creation of a strategy for the formal recognition of plan.

Management plan components: (1) Unique value; (2) Characteristics of CBNRM area; (3) Desired conditions; (4) Objectives; (5) Micro-zoning and guidelines; (6) Implementation plan; (7) Monitoring plan.

The stage of development of the different processes and management plan components varies. While important inroads have been made in stakeholder participation and a plan for information and data collection, activities such as the creation of a planning team and the definition of objectives and desired conditions have been deferred until stakeholder groups have gained the capacity and knowledge to participate in the decision-making processes.

Consequently, in the following presentation of results, four elements of the planning process have been highlighted: (1) baseline information collection; (2) the creation and implementation of a stakeholder participation strategy; (3) participatory mapping; and (4) investments in community de-

velopment. As capacity building is seen as a critical activity throughout the CBNRM land-use planning process, it has been integrated into each of these elements.

*Element 1: The collection of **baseline information** on the socio-economic and biological characteristics of the area.*

In the Monkoto Corridor, CBNRM information collection is an on-going process. Previously collected information on the socio-economic characteristics and the biological value of the corridor were what led to its selection as a priority CBNRM zone and have been important for the identification of different stakeholder groups. Additional types of information collection, including threats and opportunities analyses and participatory mapping have been or are being implemented together with communities and their representatives. Further details are provided in subsequent sections.

*Element 2 : The implementation of a **stakeholder strategy** that incorporates: (1) platforms of consultation, collaboration and management; (2) activities geared towards informing communities and building capacity; and (3) a communication strategy.*

Platforms of consultation, collaboration and management are the launching points for work with communities and other stakeholder groups. Over time they will evolve into the different levels of governance of the CBNRM zone. At the highest level, these structures will be inclusive of a larger group of actors including government representatives.

In the Monkoto Corridor CBNRM zone, the first step in working with communities was to create platforms of collaboration and consultation bringing together representatives of different villages. Four different **thematic groups** were created : (1) forest, wildlife and agriculture; (2) fisheries and freshwater management; (3) local chiefdoms and good governance; and (4) civil society and local development. Representatives were selec-

<sup>6</sup> “Reducing the rate of forest degradation and loss of biodiversity through increased local, national, and regional natural resource management capacity”

ted by villages based on their role in the use and governance of natural resources as well as their social status (including members of local NGOs and associations). Representing 113 villages, these 205 volunteer “environment counsellors” serve as intermediaries between WWF, ICCN, partner organizations and local communities. They are responsible for the two-way flow of information between thematic groups and communities as well as organizing and supporting activities such as participatory mapping.

With the assistance of the environment counsellors, **village management committees** have been initiated in 62 villages. These nascent structures are responsible for: (1) the planning, regulation and monitoring of natural resource use; and (2) the future elaboration of community development and natural resource management plans; and will serve as the conduit for larger-scale land-use planning and management plan development in the Monkoto Corridor CBNRM zone.

As a consequence of the work of environment counsellors:

The villages of Betamba and Likwela report that they no longer permit « foreigners » to hunt in their forests because they are considered one of the principal causes of the decline in wildlife numbers and the increase in commercial hunting.

Along the roads between Monkoto and Mbanda and Monkoto and Yongo, villages have stopped using small gauge nets and poison when fishing.

WWF promotes the values of free prior and informed consent in their work with communities. Communities are provided with the **information and capacity** to determine and implement their own sustainable development vision and to accept or refuse to participate in the process of land-use planning. As a secondary benefit, their increased understanding and capacity should enable them to participate more actively in national debates on zoning, land tenure, revenue sharing from natural resource-based industries and other initiatives that may impact their resources and livelihoods.

In the SLS Landscape, thematic group representatives were guided through the process of analyzing the impact of their activities – both positive and negative – on their land, water and natural resources. The different thematic groups then identified improved land and natural resource management practices using information provided by experts in agronomy and natural resource management. In the thematic groups “local chiefdoms and good governance” and “civil society and local development” an emphasis was placed on legislation, the importance of natural resource governance and the concept and potential benefits of community forest management. As a follow-up to these different analyses and discussions, the environment counsellors reflected on their visions for natural resource management in the corridor. The shared vision was to **“assure the improvement of livelihoods of local communities by re-establishing and sustainably managing the forest and fauna of the area”**.

In August 2007, WWF partnered with the national NGO, Avocats Verts (Green Lawyers), and held a workshop for environment counsellors and local authorities (157 participants). The goal of the workshop was to introduce communities to Congolese laws on natural resource use and to influence future management decisions. Legislation on nature conservation (wildlife exploitation, management and trade; protected areas), fishing, freshwater resources and forests (Forest Code of 2002) was distributed and debated. Prior to the workshop, most participants had no access to or information pertaining to environmental laws. At the end of the workshop, participants highlighted three lessons learned: (1) the relevance of the material to ICCN and other local authorities in the area and the importance of their participation in similar, future workshops; (2) that their present use of natural resources is in many cases illegal under Congolese law; and (3) that there are numerous contradictions between customary practices and norms, and national legislation.

Many communities in the SLS Landscape lack access to radio and other sources of information. Also a large portion of the population is illiterate or unable to understand media service communications in Lingala and French. Communication



strategies, often in the form of environmental education activities, are a way to better inform and involve a larger number and different segments of the population as well as to change behaviour over time. A recent initiative by the Consortium's newest partner, the International Conservation and Education Fund (INCEF), will support the development and execution of a community-based media campaign. Communities and partners such as ICCN, together with national-level counterparts, will be able to translate threats, lessons learned and other information into a locally targeted, culturally appropriate format. A list of themes identified for production includes the importance of SNP, rights of indigenous people, promotion of collective action, monkey pox, bushmeat trade and poaching. A second programme being implemented by WCS in collaboration with RARE, a US NGO, uses a form of social marketing that aims to educate youth groups in the corridor on the importance of Bono conservation and the threat of bushmeat

trade.

*Element 3: The use of **participatory mapping** and complementary information to inform decisions on zoning and the development of regulations on natural resource use, access and governance.*

Participatory mapping is an important community tool to be used to define or validate existing community zones (micro-zones) and associated rules governing resource use in these different micro-zones. The maps are also a powerful tool when negotiating community rights of access to land and resources with the private sector (e.g., logging companies, agro-industrial groups), government and conservation groups. With the assistance of their trained environment counselors, 81 villages have elaborated nine maps covering 2,110 km<sup>2</sup> (38 percent) of the Monkoto Corridor (Figure 2).

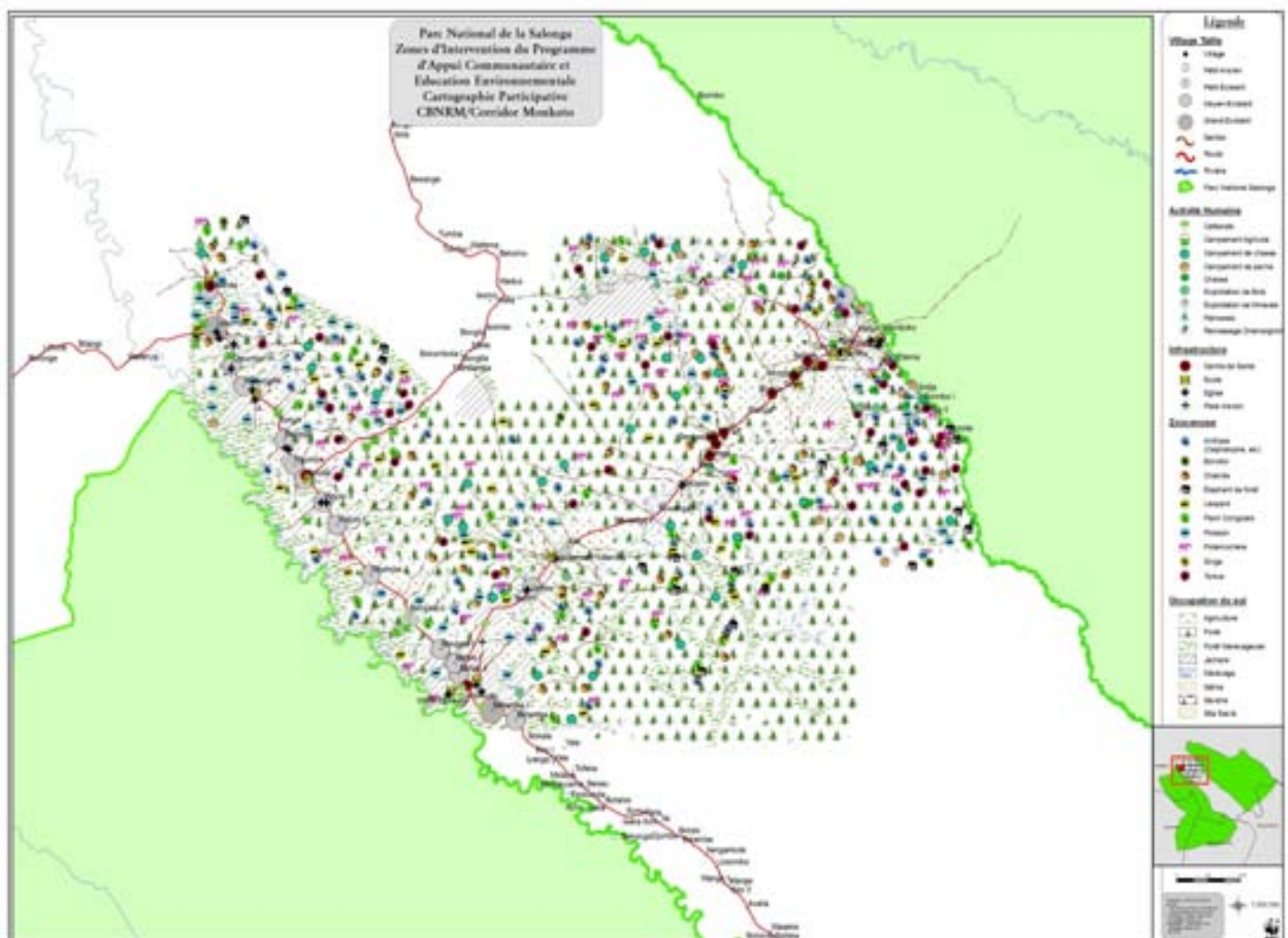


Figure 2. Preliminary results of participatory mapping in the Monkoto Corridor CBNRM zone

Concurrently, WCS is carrying out large mammal inventories in the Corridor. In recognition of the Corridor's status as a community zone, WCS has taken the innovative approach of training and deploying inventory teams comprised of WCS personnel and representatives of corridor villages and NGOs. The results of this study will be superimposed with participatory maps to further refine zoning and resource regulations in the CBNRM zone and identify options for a biological corridor between the two blocks of SNP.

***Element 4 : Investment in rural development and income-generating activities.***

Asking communities to self-regulate unsustainable practices such as commercial hunting, without providing economically viable alternatives, is short-sighted and, in the long term, will jeopardize the durability of CBNRM land-use planning and management efforts. Feedback from communities in the Monkoto Corridor has shown that the communities and individuals most reluctant to participate in different land-use planning activities are often the most outspoken about insufficient attention to community development. Therefore investing in sustainable rural development and income-generating activities is a tangible means of demonstrating the links between good natural resource management and governance, and improved livelihoods.

Within SLS, the Landscape Consortium has initiated numerous activities aimed at improving livelihoods. These activities included conducting a commodity chain analysis of local products which found that products with an interesting profit margin included maize, mushrooms, fumbwa (*Gnetum africana*), fish, caterpillars and copal (Rokotondranisa et al., 2006). Consequently, a group of Monkoto women decided to join forces and create a central market location for the selling of lucrative NTFPs such as mushrooms while aspiring to attract the interest of external buyers in the future. Other groups have increased maize production and the Consortium partner Pact is conducting further research on the merits of the

copal trade. In 2006, with support from the CARPE/USAID Small Grants Program, seven local associations and NGOs benefited from financial support for projects promoting increased agricultural and domestic animal production. As a part of this support, small grant beneficiaries and other local community-based organizations (CBOs) received training in improved agricultural and animal husbandry techniques. More recently, a second series of small grants was distributed in 2008 thanks to funding from the European Union<sup>7</sup>. The projects of the nine recipients included the rearing of pigs and chickens; increasing the production of beans, groundnuts/peanuts, rice, maize and cowpea; and environmental education in schools.

During the course of implementing these activities it became apparent that the CBOs lacked functional capacity. The CBOs lacked information on the differences between NGOs and associations and did not have the understanding or organizational capacity to design and implement economically and socially viable activities. This capacity is not only important from a livelihood perspective, but is critical if local civil society is to take a greater role in environmental protection; advocating for community rights and concerns; and monitoring the implementation of CBNRM activities. To address this deficiency, the SLS Landscape Consortium has sought the assistance of INADES (see footnote 3), a national and regional NGO, to organize a series of capacity-building workshops<sup>8</sup>. In early 2008, the first two workshops were held for Monkoto Corridor associations and NGOs. Additional workshops are planned both locally and in three other areas in the landscape.

## **Lessons learned from the CBNRM land-use planning process in the Monkoto Corridor**

### **1. Contributing to poverty reduction is**

<sup>7</sup> From the project « Renforcement des capacités de gestion de l'ICCN et appui à la réhabilitation d'aires protégées en RDC » (9 ACP ZR 4)

<sup>8</sup> Organization and functioning of a CBO, establishment of legal status and internal regulations, self-promotion, business plan development.

**critical.** Communities demand clear and concrete actions demonstrating the links between conservation, sustainable natural resource management, poverty reduction and improved rural conditions. It is critical to start investing from the beginning in building community capacity to develop and implement sustainable income-generating activities through support to associations, village groups and NGOs. Without this capacity, the long-term impact of investments in community activities will be limited.

Tools such as commodity chain and cost-benefit analyses and the development of business plans can be important tools for assisting communities to identify sustainable income-generating activities. However, the full value of these tools will only be realized if and when linkages between producer groups and commercial entities are established, which is particularly challenging in such a remote location.

Greater emphasis should be placed on establishing links with organizations working in rural development, agriculture and small business as well as other sectors such as education and health. Investment in rural development is also an important tool to gain the trust of reticent stakeholder groups.

**2. The process of land-use planning in CBNRM zones is only as valuable as the ability to secure community contractual or concessionary rights.** The de facto rural systems of land use, resource use and governance contradict the de jure status of the State as the legal title holder of all the country's land and resources. Communities refer to land and resources as "theirs" and traditional authorities continue in practice to wield considerable control over the distribution of agricultural lands and to a lesser extent the use of fishing and hunting areas.

Although contradictions between customary local law and formal national laws prevail and the debate on the definition of community forests is ongoing, it is necessary for conservation organizations to proceed with CBNRM initiatives in order to meet urgent conservation and livelihood objectives. By using a more inclusive and

decentralized approach, starting with securing the buy-in of local and provincial government officials who can then be used to galvanize the support of their colleagues in the relevant national ministries, there is a far greater likelihood that these efforts will be accepted by the government. At the same time the results of this work can contribute to resolving the on-going debate over the meaning of local community forests and local community concessions in the Forest Code and corresponding implementation legislation.

**3. It is important to build the capacity of local communities to participate in national dialogues.** Communities are eager to participate in the development of laws and other initiatives impacting their future and their voice is critical to these discussions. However, given communities' lack of familiarity with national laws and policies, in order for them to participate as equal partners, they must first be provided with the knowledge and tools to participate. National-level decision making on processes such as land-use planning should not move at a pace that excludes the time necessary to build their capacity and create a forum for their viewpoints to be heard.

**4. If women are to be important vehicles of change in communities targeted strategies will need to be developed to ensure their participation in CBNRM planning and management processes.** Unfortunately, until now the participation of women in CBNRM activities has been very limited. To increase the involvement of women it will be necessary to develop an approach that takes into consideration time constraints and socio-cultural impediments to their full participation. For example, only a few have been nominated as representatives to the thematic groups and men defend their absence by stating that they are unable to travel away from their family and responsibilities to participate in meetings and workshops. As with socio-economic study focus groups, it may be necessary to consider organizing separate, village-based meetings for women to ensure that they are fully informed of the activities to date, to obtain their input, and to collaboratively work together to develop a strategy for their long-term inclusion in the development and management of the Monkoto CBNRM zone. An adaptive methodology is



equally important when working with groups such as the Batwa.

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