

**Wildlife Conservation Society - Congo
Lac Télé Community Reserve Project**

**Development of Community Participative Management
Lac Télé Community Reserve**

Introduction

Participative mapping of traditional community territories and collaborative identification of potential internal regulations for community territories are being developed in Lac Télé Community Reserve with the goal of developing participative and sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources in the reserve. As this is a community reserve many people live within its limits and have the right to exploit the natural resources found therein. These people thus must play a major part in management of these resources and of course have the greatest interest in the future of these resources as they rely upon them. With this in mind we are working with communities to prepare village natural resource management plans. These will be incorporated into, and provide community support for, the reserve management plan and thus become legally enforceable.

Each village contains many family groups each of which has customary authority over traditional territories. These people still maintain some authority over these territories and the natural resources therein, thus it is most productive and effective to build organically on existing structures to create village conservation action plan, rather than create artificial systems. These family groups are found throughout the reserve in each community in both Bomitaba (90% of population) and other ethnic groups.

The specific goals of participative management are to:

- a) Ensure sustainable use of natural resources (notably fish, hunted wildlife and forests) and conservation of biodiversity in village territories;
- b) Ensure national and customary laws pertaining to management of natural resources are respected;
- c) Develop effective conservation and natural resource management in village territories;
- d) Develop a high level of local autonomy in conservation and natural resources management;
- e) Safe-guard local rights and authority over territories and the natural resources therein.

To establish community participative management, we required the following information:

- a) The limits of each traditional community territory. It is important to establish the limits of territories as this will enable people to establish those zones which they have the right to exploit and also to resolve disputes between neighbouring communities more efficiently. These limits will also enable communities to manage non-locals trying to access their territories.
- b) Identification of the names of family groups and their traditional residency in each village so that we would be able to work with them to develop management plans;

- not all family groups are still resident their original villages and thus not all have traditional territories that they control.
- c) Size of the population in each family group to enable effective and realistic development and implementation of management plans.

Once this information was obtained we were able to establish community natural resource management committees. These committees would be part of the program for working with each family group for identification of customary laws and other management practises that they would like to establish as part of village conservation action plans based on identified threats to natural resources. This will aid the sustainable management of the natural resources in their territories and in management planning.

Methods

Identifying village natural resource committees

We visited each of the villages in the reserve, some several times, to establish the limits of traditional community territories, the names of family groups and the number of people they represented.

- 1) *Residency of each family group.* Each family group was asked to provide its family history as part of the assessment of traditional authority of community territories; some families have moved from original villages and they may have customary authority over territories which are at some distance from their current village of residence. The histories were also noted as a means for each community to aid dispute resolution over territories; e.g. some families may have sold or bought part of their territory and this history will support this. The histories were noted for inclusion as appendices in village conservation action plans.
- 2) *Establishing limits of traditional community territories.* The socio-economic team worked with each family group to delineate the limits of traditional community territories using easily identified features such as rivers, stream and ponds. These were noted and entered into GIS for establishing territory maps.
- 3) *Family population sizes.* Each household in a family was visited and the number of people in each household was noted. This information has been entered into the project database for enabling communities to make decisions which are realistic for the size of each territory.

Creation of village management plans

Village conservation action plans were constructed with the active participation of each community with the following procedure.

- 4) *Village natural resource management committees.* Each village (or in the larger villages, the quartier) was asked to form a village natural resources management

- committee. Each committee was comprised of representatives of each family group having authority over traditional territories in the area.
- 5) *Women's natural resource management committees.* Each village was also asked to form a women's natural resource management committee based on similar principles. These committees were comprised of female members of the family groups having authority over traditional territories with the aim of ensuring women were represented in natural resource management decision-making.
 - 6) *Identification of potential management actions.* Each committee (village and women's) was visited and the members were asked to provide details of customary natural resource management in their territories which could be incorporated into village conservation action plans. They were also asked to identify what is necessary to reduce current threats to unsustainable activities and to restore natural resources to former abundance.
 - 7) *Village management plans.* The management actions are to be reviewed by the reserve conservator and project management for assessment of their legal viability and feasibility. Once this has been completed then the action plans will be returned to village and women's committees for approval and signature.

Results

This program has achieved the following results:

- 1) Family groups having authority over traditional community territories have been identified in each village (see Figures 1 and 2).
- 2) A definitive participative map of the traditional community territories of all villages in the reserve based on identified family groups (Figures 1 and 2).
- 3) With each family household we noted the populations of each community (Table 1).
- 4) We have enabled each community to establish village natural resource management committees based on traditional family authority.
- 5) We have aided the establishment within each community of women's natural resource management committees.
- 6) Village and women's committees have described customary laws (Table 2) and suggested straightforward solutions to unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. These are principally: recreating traditional systems of local management of territories; application of customary and national laws to exclude illegal users and reduce over-exploitation; protection of breeding stocks and young individuals of fish and wildlife; development of alternatives to unsustainable livelihoods; and support from the two conservation NGOs in the reserve – WCS and CFC. However, each village has proposed many other different solutions and management practises which must be standardised within the law and be feasible given the budgetary and logistic constraints of conservation in the reserve.
- 7) Establishment of village management plans is at its penultimate phase. As so many management plans require synthesis and each plan varies greatly, this phase has not yet been completed.

Terroirs RCLT

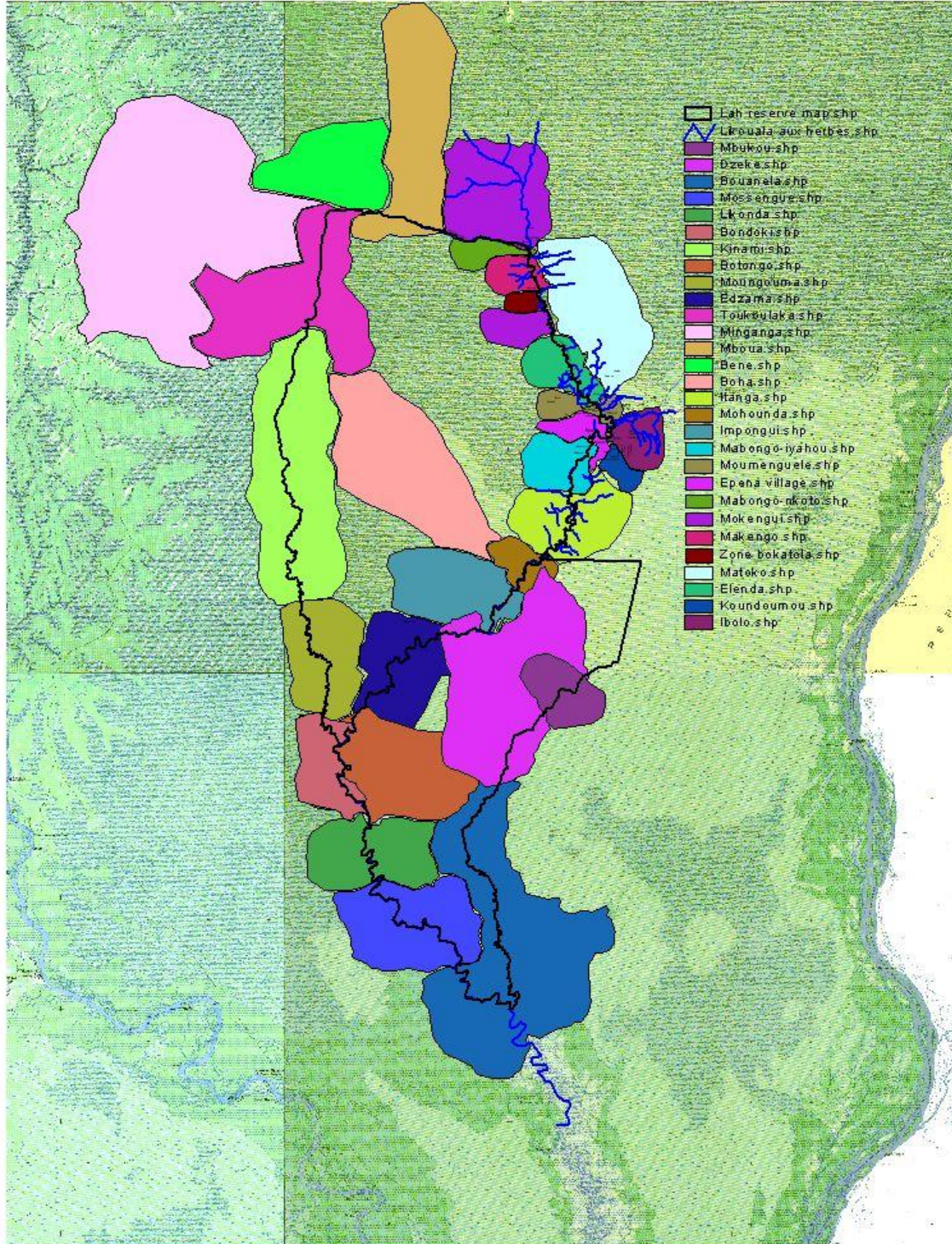


Figure 1. Map of traditional community territories of all villages in and around LTCR. Note areas within the reserve which do not fall within traditional territories may be considered for higher levels of protection. Note also that large areas of territories fall outside the limits of the reserve, thus we have already prepared a large area of the periphery of LTCR within the landscape for zoning.

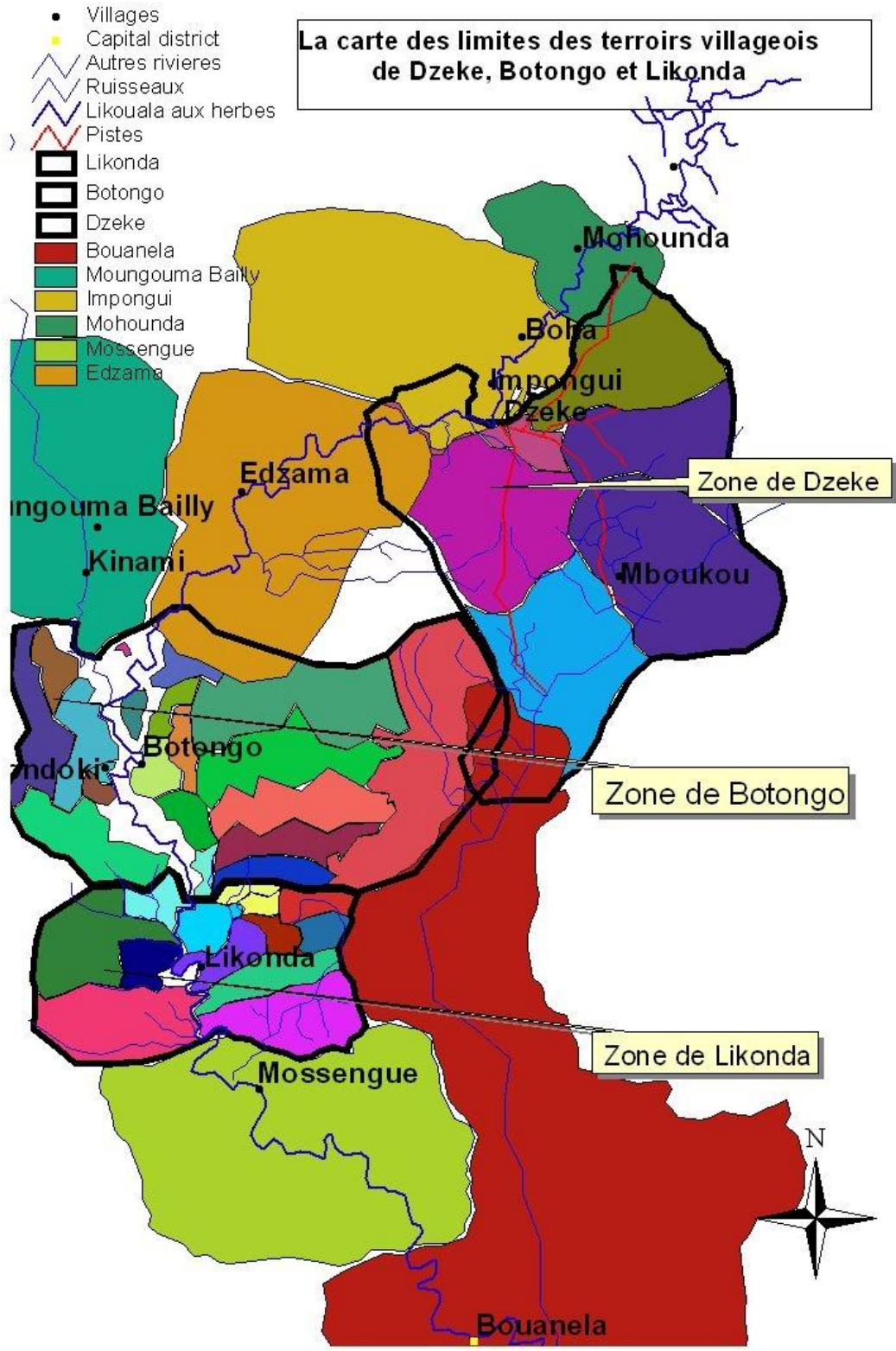


Figure 2. Detailed map of traditional territories for central villages of LTCR indicating territories of a number of family groups for the villages of Bondoki, Botongo and Likonda.

Village	Population
Boha	372
Bokatola	229
Bondoki	268
Botongo	502
Bouanela	1,683
Dzeke	1,169
Edzama	475
Epena	2,216
Ibolo	423
Impongui	205
Itanga	392
Kinami	931
Koundoumou	219
Likonda	324
Mabongo Iyahou	64
Mabongo Nkoto	547
Makengo	524
Matoko	847
Mboukou	179
Mohounda	251
Mokengui	1,268
Mossengue	532
Moungouma Bailly	989
Total	14,609

Table 1. Populations of each village in Lac Télé Community Reserve. This has also enabled us to monitor population changes since the first census in 2001.

List of most widespread customary laws
1) A communal hunting party is authorised by the notable (elder) of the village and a ritual is always organised before going on the hunt.
2) Fishing in family lakes and ponds is under the authorisation of the head of the family group.
3) It is strictly forbidden for an impure person to take part in a communal fishing party.
4) The violation of the territory limits of other families will be punished by a fine established by the notable of the family or the village.
5) It is strictly forbidden to enter the territory of others without prior authorisation of the head of the family group or notable.
6) All sacred forests where traditional healers perform rituals before a hunting or fishing party are to be respected by all.
7) Women requiring land for cultivating manioc can obtain it after making a request from the notable of the land-holding family group.
8) All legal disputes over land in villages are to be resolved by the notables.

Table 2. List of most widespread customary laws in LTCCR communities. Other more local customary laws will be included as appropriate in village management plans.

Discussion

The development of participative community management within the reserve is well advanced. Given the complex nature of the reserve with its many communities and logistic difficulties, the positive outlook and contributions of each community and village management committee towards sustainable management should be lauded. The finalisation of village conservation action plans with MEFE approval will be achieved over the coming period and will be implemented following community approval and signatures accordingly. This will ensure that the management structures and agreements developed will be realistic and effective in ensuring sustainable use of natural resources by over 14,000 people and will guarantee their livelihoods for years to come.