



**SOS Fund number - # 6b.033**

**Proposal Title: *Analytical synthesis of the threats to the protected areas in the Congo Basin***

Start date: **5/20/97**  
 Duration: **5.5 months**  
 Total Grant amount: **\$10,000**

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Abstract

Today, there is an emerging resolution among conservationists that the creation and continuation of protected areas is still the most important method of conserving biological diversity. The important biological habitats in most of the protected areas are now experiencing serious and increasing degradation resulting from expanding agricultural frontiers, illegal hunting, frequent political turmoil, and a host of other factors. In order to mitigate such threats and set up a new efficient strategy of conservation, it is imperative to have a good understanding of these threats, the interaction between local populations and their environment, and the roles of the different stakeholders.

The objectives of this study are:

- . To set up a typology of threats, describing the characteristics of and actors in each threat identified, and to assess the impact of each threat against protected areas in the Congo Basin.
- . to find out if satisfying local socio-economic needs through development might be detrimental for protected areas and if there are activities that might improve income levels and reduce poverty without jeopardizing the protected areas.
- . to review the legal statutes governing protected areas in each country of the Congo Basin with a focus on their strengths and weaknesses, and level of enforcement.
- . to uncover and assess the major activities which are consistent with protected areas security while generating benefits for local communities as a means of both mitigating the potential resistance to establishing protected areas, and creating an incentive for conferring protection to local resources.

The results of the study will give an idea of the issues surrounding the durability of protected areas in the Congo Basin and the local context in which these issues arise. It also will offer tentative strategies that could, with further development, offer valid and effective responses to the issues raised.