



SOS Fund number - # 6b.099

Proposal Title: *Botanical training to support conservation, education, and research in Central Africa*

Start date: 4/1/99
Duration: 8 months
Total Grant amount: \$54,945

Investigator/Contact
Institutional Affiliation
Contact Information

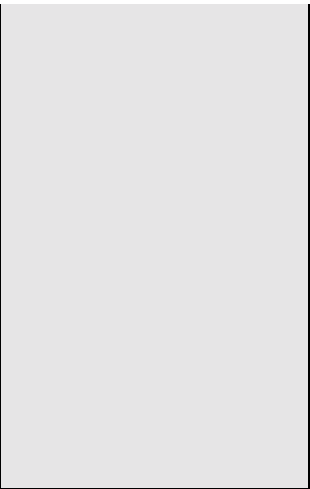
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Abstract

In 1996, participants at a CARPE-sponsored Herbaria Workshop reviewed current needs for botanical expertise and institutional capacity in the Central African region and considered the possible adaptation of the integrated botanical training program used by Missouri Botanical Garden (MBG) in Madagascar. As a follow-up, a team from Missouri Botanical Garden and the U.S. Forest Service – International Forestry then carried out a botanical training program development survey in Cameroon, Gabon, and Congo (Brazzaville) to gather input on the design and most suitable role of a training program. The survey found that botanical expertise and training are in high demand by both government agencies and conservation projects, but there is a shortage of personnel with skills and experience to meet this need. At the same time, infrastructure is available to support a practical botanical training program, and would facilitate training at a variety of levels. The present proposal represents a response to these findings.

Bioresources Development and Conservation Programme-Cameroon (BDCPC) and the Smithsonian's Center for Tropical Forest Science (CTFS) seek CARPE's support to provide critically needed training to a cadre of field and herbarium botanists in Central Africa. CTFS proposes to partner with BDCPC to hold an intensive twenty-day training course for field botanists/botanical inventory specialists in field plant identification and collection, held in Cameroon in early 1999. A second course for herbarium managers in herbarium plant identification and management to be held in Gabon will be proposed by the Missouri Botanical Garden (MBG) and the Herbar National du Gabon, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique et Technologique – CENAREST later in the year.

The primary objective of the training series will be to raise the level of basic skills in plant identification, taxonomy, collection, inventory, and herbarium management and utilization among a carefully selected group of Central Africans. The field botany course will be designed for individuals with a strong professional interest in plant inventory and field identification activities for whom the training gained will support future work in a professional position in conservation, forest management, biological research, or other related field. The herbarium course, on the other hand, will target individuals currently employed by regional herbaria, government agencies, or NGOs, who would benefit from training in the full use of an herbarium, including for the



purpose of identifying or verifying plant material gathered in the field. The selection of participants for both courses will consider not only background and qualifications, but also the likelihood that the knowledge and skills gained will be applied in a professional position.

The training series will also help to create a regional network of forest scientists and managers working in the fields of plant taxonomy and forest conservation. Additional benefits relevant to CARPE's framework include creating a vested interest in the biological and economic fate of Central Africa's forests, publicizing current CARPE partner efforts in Central Africa, and producing and distributing botanical field and technician manuals for Central African forests.

The proposed work will focus only on the first course in the series, the botanical field training course.
