

Trip Report (Bangui-CAR)

Purpose:

- 1- Run CARPE Environmental Education campaign using CARPE first phase products.
- 2- Respond to CAR US Ambassador's invitation
- 3- And Research opportunities to revive CARPE activities in CAR

Date:

- 1- June 29 to July 06, 2002

Travellers: - Nicodeme TCHAMOU (Regional facilitator – CARPE Gabon)
- Antoine EYEBE (National coordinator – CARPE Cameroon)
- Charles TEKAM (Program officer – Cameroon office)

Key issues:

- The law governing local NGO in CAR got signed by The president his excellency Ange Felipe PATASSE last May 21st, 2002, providing NGO with operational legal framework (copy available on request).
- As peace process is moving on smoothly in CAR, NGO communities are getting themselves organized. They just revive CIONGCA (Collectif inter ONG de la Centrafrique), appointed its president and secretary general.
- There is a great willingness by the government to see NGO become serious partners for development by helping the government implement its action plan. To materialize this, a position is been created and located at the prime ministry, to be in charge of Decentralized cooperation and relations with NGOs.
- Both the Prime Minister and the minister of environment and forest want to see CARPE establish an office in Bangui.
- His Excellency Mattie R. SHARPLESS, US ambassador in CAR is a little bit reluctant to see CARPE management structure moved to Kinshasa, an unstable place she said.

Opportunities:

- WWF Bangui is willing to host a CARPE focal point if we happen to set up one.
- There's a newly created network of environmental journalist that CARPE can rely on to disseminate results of its findings as the program moves along (environmental education and awareness)
- In order to get IMF (International Monetary fund) credit, CAR government is now undergoing a vast campaign of transparency and good governance. People who committed embezzlements are now being caught up, judged and jailed accordingly. This may be a good time for CARPE to intervene and prescribe forest environmental governance with the overall notion of decentralization into the state agenda. This can be easily done through WRI effort on decentralization, Global forest watch, IRM activity empowering civil society and so on.
- Two major environmental efforts are going on in two sites in CAR. Opportunity for CARPE to line up with and really make a difference.
 - Bangassou Project funded by GEF/PNUD
 - "Projet conservation des ecosystemes Naturels des Bassins versants Chinko-Ouara", an effort by the African Rainforest and River Conservation Inc. Based in US (project document available on request).

Recommendations:

Giving the current situation in CAR where by:

- Smoothly, the peace process is moving on
- A huge campaign of good governance and transparency is now going on,
- Soon the country will be eligible to IMF support,
- There is a great willingness from the state part to provide legal framework to NGO,
- Many international NGO are operational in the country (WWF, ECOFAC, PNUD, FAO, GTZ, PRGIE, OSFAM Quebec and so on),
- African Rain Forest just sign a protocol of agreement with the state,
- There is a great interest from the prime minister, the minister of environment and forest and the US ambassador in CAR to see CARPE become more active in the country,
- WWF-Bangui is willing to host CARPE in CAR,

I personally think we should start planning a focal point office in CAR. Such an office can be easily managed from CARPE management structure based in USAID Kinshasa (as from next year) through an agreement with WWF-Bangui.

Prelude:

Travelling within Africa is always a headache. We thought, with new reforms happening within CAMAIR, one could rely on for travels within Africa.

We had to be at Douala airport at 4.30 am to catch up the plane taking off at 6.30 am. At 7.30am, we were still on line waiting to be boarded. Suddenly we heard from a CAMAIR agent that passengers without luggage will be given priority for boarding and we were standing there with two handcars loaded with four boxes of CARPE books and three suitcases. This was really a negative signal for us. However, around 8.00 am, and after many barks back and forward, we got boarded.

They refused to board Jean Hamindou, WWF national director in CAR, coming back from COMIFAC meeting in Yaounde. The reason being that he never reconfirms his ticket. We were however surprised that the plane took off with empty seats.

We landed in Bangui around 10.00 am, found our suitcases, but all four boxes never came in for the entire time we where in CAR.

Day one (June 29, 2002).

Four delegates from NGO community (CIONCA) welcomed us at the airport and took us to Levys Hotel where they had already booked rooms for us. Immediately we got settled, we moved into a meeting discussing and finalizing our program of activities in CAR. One major issue to mention here is the fact that the budget prepared by CIONCA for our activities in CAR was far beyond what we planned. Fortunately we were able to get WWF administration over the phone and they sent us via western union the shortfall.

In the afternoon, we toured Bangui and field visited a local NGO, CERAD promoting medicinal plants

Day 2 (June 30, 2002)

- We went to the airport to check on our boxes since there was camair flight coming in. Unfortunately nothing arrived.

- We went to verify and make sure the conference room was ready for us for the following day meeting with NGO.

Day 3 (July 1st, 2002)

- Meeting with NGO.

Around fifty people attended from various NGO based in Bangui as well as from remote places (150 Km from Bangui). I started by giving a short presentation on CARPE evolvment in the region and then summarized CARPE activities so far developed in CAR. The president of CIONCA took over, presenting their network, moved on various challenges they are facing, which include: Lack of facilities,

instability in the country that discourages donors and international partners however, ended with a hope that peace in CAR will help build up NGO community.

Presentation moved on with the newly created network of environmental journalists with access to several radio stations and national TV antenna.

At the end of the meeting, while refreshment was going on, I gave several interviews on Radio and TV national antennas where journalist kept on insisting to find out when CARPE is going to be physically present in CAR.

Day 4 (July 2nd, 2002)

We started with a meeting with Jean Hamindou (National Director, WWF-Bangui) During which, we discussed the possibility of posting a focal point within WWF – Bangui office, he welcomed the idea and said that they have more than enough space to accommodate the focal point if we happen to set up one.

After this, we went to SOFITEL HOTEL to negotiate and see if we can rent their conference hall for the workshop on: Environmental education campaign using carpe first phase results which we push till the last day (Friday) hoping that our four boxes of books will meanwhile arrive. Everything worked out well with sofitel; we got the conference hall (120 seats) and make all arrangements for coffee break. The only thing missing was the LCD projector. We tried renting one, but could not find any in BANGUI. Meanwhile, we heard from WWF- Bangui that PNUD has one but cannot lent. With Zephirin' help, we initiated a letter that got signed by Simon YANOU-Gonia, director at the prime ministry office requesting PNUD to help support CARPE activity in CAR by providing us with the LCD projector for the workshop. That's how we finally got the equipment.

Day 5 (July 3rd, 2002)

We held several meetings:

Meeting with his Excellency Job ISIMA from the ministry of foreign affair:

In preparation to the workshop on Friday, we met with His Excellency Job ISIMA from the ministry of foreign affair, to request his help and weight to distribute our invitation letters to Ministers, diplomatic representations, and country representative of International organizations in CAR, which, he accepted graciously. We knew that, if invitations went out with a cover letter from foreign affair ministry, People from political arena would be obliged somehow to attend the workshop.

His Excellency Job also seized the opportunity to urge CARPE to set up a satellite office in CAR.

Meeting with the US Ambassador in Bangui:

At 10.00 am, we met with his Excellency MATTIE R. SHARPLESS, US Ambassador in Bangui. During our meeting we briefed his Excellency on CARPE

effort in CAR to date and the evolvement of the program in the region. She was more or less interested in three things.

- Activities developed in CAR by CARPE international partners
- Why this decision moving the management of CARPE in DRC
- If CARPE is even planning on setting up an office in CAR.

I gave her the historical background on our efforts trying to set an office in Bangui, which, failed due to political unrest.

Meeting with OXFAM Quebec:

This meeting was an informative one, we wanted to know what OXFAM stands for and what are they doing and how CARPE can leverage their efforts.

OXFAM Quebec is a humanitarian international NGO based in Bangui with headquarters in Canada. In CAR their environmental actions are centered on rehabilitating three refugees sites through afforestation.

Meeting with his Excellency Mme GOUNEBA Nathalie Constance, Minister of water, forest, wildlife, fishery, environment and tourism.

During our meeting, the minister insisted on three points:

- 1- How CARPE can help leverage the ministry efforts; she wants CARPE to help setting up a control system to monitor and track down fiscal fraud in forestry sector (maybe this an opportunity for WRI/GFW to launch its activities in CAR).
- 2- She would like CARPE to help disseminate CAR Forestry Action Plan, which is now finalized but hasn't been distributed widely.
- 3- She would like to see CARPE establish a physical presence in CAR by setting up an office. She even went far saying that she would personally write to CARPE manager in US, to raise up this issue.

After these series of meetings, we went back and packed our stuff for a field trip to Mbaiki in Lobaye division. We left Bangui the same day around 5.30 pm and got to Mbaiki at 8.00 pm. We were welcomed by the prefet who took us to High school of Rural development Institute dormitory for the night. (No comment here, but we had no light because the generator runs only till 8.00 pm, no tape water, beds with uncover mattresses, no blankets)

Day 6 (July 04, 2002)

We started with a large group meeting with Local NGO and local authorities (Mayor, prefet, Chiefs) of Mbaiki.

Two points were raised up here.

- Learn more about CARPE activities in the region in general and in CAR in particular
- Find out how CARPE can help leverage their efforts.

After the meeting, we went on visiting field activities, basically centered on agro forestry intercropping with leguminous species like *Cajanus cajan*, *acacia magnium* and, some afforestation projects using *Tectonia grandis*.

We visited the high school of rural development and met with officials. In our effort trying to see what kinds of collaboration we can develop with the school, we noticed that, they've a huge and poorly managed resource center with almost no book on forest environment. We therefore decided as immediate action to send at least two huge boxes of books to this institution via the prime minister office to avoid customs headache.

Day 7 (July 05, 2002)

Environmental education campaign in CAR:

Though we never received our four boxes of books, briefings sheets, CD and so on, we decided to move ahead with the environmental education campaign in CAR.

Planned to start at 9.00am, we kicked off at 9.30am. The SOFITEL conference room was full of invitees from different venue (NGO, diplomatic arena, institutions, private sectors, government and so on). Around 75 people were present at this event.

Zephirin started by welcoming CARPE crew in CAR, followed by the aim of our mission, gave background information on CARPE and handed over to the technical director, first advisor at the ministry of environment and forest (DOUNGOUBE Gustave) who again welcomed CARPE, highlighted CARPE's contribution to the overall effort of forest conservation in CAR and closed his speech by his disappointment that CARPE hasn't set up an office in CAR.

Antoine EYEBE took over the floor and ran through detailed program of the event, presented our apology for documents that had not arrived and promised to make sure they received them in a near future.

I went on with the power point presentation and we opened the floor for questions and contributions. Many came up which, we answered easily. We closed the conference at 11.00 am with a coffee break offered by CARPE and during which, discussions continued.

Audience at the prime ministry:

Right after the event, we ran to the prime ministry. In fact Zephirin told us that when the Prime Minister learnt about CARPE team visiting Bangui on official business he said to him, I want to meet with the team personally. Hence, on Friday July 5, from 11.45 to 12.00 am we were received in audience by the Prime Minister his Excellency Martin ZIGUELE.

During the audience we briefed his Excellency on CARPE activities in the region in general and in CAR in particular.

He responded by saying that, he wishes to see NGO become states partners, implementers of state projects in the field with local communities to help reduce poverty in rural milieu. He also pledged to see CARPE becoming physically

present in CAR to build up local NGO' capacity. He ended by saying that it will be hard to adjust the country economy without external help.

Radio conference at the national antenna – Radio Bangui

After the prime ministry we were caught up for a radio conference at the national radio antenna, Conference during which questions were focused on:

- What's CARPE
- CARPE activities in CAR so far
- What kind of collaboration CARPE has with the government, other international institutions except WWF
- Why is it that CARPE is not physically present in CAR
- What role local NGO can play fostering CARPE agenda in CAR.
- What are the major conclusions of our visit and when are we coming back.

Tele conference at the national TV antenna – Bangui

After the radio we went to the TV for the same purpose. Almost same questions came up.

Day 8 (July 06, 2002)

End of our mission, Camair plane which, supposed to depart at 7.30 am, finally took off at 2.00 pm.

Nicodeme TCHAMOU
CARPE Libreville.

Appendix:

Keys people met with:

Nom et Prénom	Titre	Entité	Téléphone	
Doungoubé Gustave	Technical director	Minister of water, forest, wildlife, fishery, environment and tourism	(236) 503808	B
Mme GOUNEBA Nathalie Constance	Minister	Minister of water, forest, wildlife, fishery, environment and tourism		B
His Excellency Martin ZIGUELE	Prime Minister	Prime Ministry		

Job ISIMA	Ambassadeur Secrétaire Général	Ministère des Affaires Etrangères	236 61 06 77 50 53 69	
Jacques Boris BELLE	Director	CERAD	04 41 40 61 75 42	J
Mattie R. SHARPLESS	Ambassadeur	US Embassy	236 61 02 00	S
Philippe MAKENDEBOU-TENDE	Economist specialist	US Embassy	236 61 02 00 61 70 20	
Suzanne TOUKAM	Coordinatrice	Ami de la Nature (ADN)	236 50 44 50	o