

Land-use planning strategy document

Landscape 3, Lopé–Chaillu–Louesse Zone 3010004, Ikobey CBNRM, Gabon

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1 Introduction

The Ikobey CBNRM zone includes a unique grouping of villages on the northern periphery of Waka National Park. It is one of the most remote areas of Gabon, where about 1,000 people of the tsogho Bantu group and Babongo pygmy group live in 14 villages. Though these villages are close together, they are far from any adjacent villages – there are only two other villages along the 100km of road to the nearest administrative centre in Fougamou. The degree of isolation means that the economy is primarily based on subsistence and there is currently little commercial trade. Traditional healing is a significant contributor to the local economy and people travel far from Libreville to consult local nganga's. In large part due to its isolation, it is one of the few areas in Gabon where wildlife is still abundant near villages.

The zone is also entirely allocated in logging concessions, most of which are currently inactive. The largest concession (CFA) has recently been sold and logging may shortly recommence. This expansion of logging activity will greatly facilitate access to the area and is likely to provoke considerable social and ecological change.

The WCS-led consortium has been active in the field in Waka since late 2003. With CARPE's support the team has, among other activities conducted comprehensive participatory mapping and socio-economic surveys in these villages, initiated a village outreach program, initiated a capacity building program with the babongo pygmy population, and completed the first ever surveys of wildlife distribution and human impact in adjacent areas. This document presents a brief outline of the strategy for developing and implementing a consensus management plan for the zone, closely following the CARPE/USFS template provided.

2 Identify and Define Roles of Planning Team

2.1 Roles and responsibilities pertaining to planning process of lead NGO staff clearly defined.

- WCS Country Director (Joe Walston) is responsible for overall strategic direction and liaison with CARPE.
- WCS Landscape lead (Malcolm Starkey) co-ordinates field activities and manages the sub-contracts with MBG and IPACC.
- WCS' Assistant Director for External Relations (Romain Calaque) is charged with liaison with the Gabonese National Parks Agency (ANPN), particularly the Cellule d'Amenagement, and managing the sub-contract with RAPAC.
- The WCS Project Manager for the Waka zone (Franck Lepemangoye) is charged with implementing all field activities relating to the land-use planning process in the zone and working with the National Park Conservateur and local representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Forests.

2.2 Additional staff hired as needed, and/or any tasks contracted to partner organizations.

- Facilitation of the formal stakeholder meetings for land-use plan development and validation has been sub-contracted to the Réseau des Aires Protégées de l'Afrique Centrale (RAPAC).
- Support for community capacity building with the Babongo populations on the park periphery has been sub-contracted to the Indigenous People's of Africa Consultative Committee (IPACC).
- Comparative surveys of botanical diversity and forest habitat type necessary for micro-zoning have been sub-contracted to Missouri Botanical Garden (MBG)

2.3 Roles of non-lead NGOs clearly defined.

The three non-lead NGOs have specific and clear missions for this zone:

IPACC – support the capacity of the marginalized Babongo population to engage in land-use planning process, and ensure that the management plan contains adequate provisions for obtaining free, prior and informed consent for any activities that may impact local populations.

RAPAC – facilitate formal public consultation meets necessary for the development and validation of the management plan (3 meetings envisaged for this zone, likely combined with meetings for the Waka NP and West Waka ERZ zones).

MBG – conduct baseline botanical surveys to describe patterns of species richness and endemism in the park and its buffer zone to inform the micro-zoning plan.

3 Information/Data Gathering

3.1 Physical

3.1.1 Boundaries of the zone delineated.

- The limits of the zone are defined based on participatory mapping conducted in 2005 and 2006 (Bouanga, 2006) and refined in 2007 (Abitsi and Lepemangoye-Mouleka, 2007). The zone is bounded to the north by the Ikoy river and to the south by Waka National Park.
- The boundaries have yet to be validated in a stakeholder meeting and it is likely that there will be some minor modifications, particularly:
 - certain individuals from Divinde and Evouta village cross to the northern bank of the Ikoy on occasion and this may need to be included
 - a number of families use a portion of the northern segment of Waka National Park for subsistence needs (collecting Garcina, honey and hunting) and the limits of both the park and community zone may need to be modified. The consortium will continue to lobby for a fair and effective resolution to this issue.

3.1.2 Maps/satellite imagery compiled

- Shapefiles of watercourses, roads, park boundaries and data from wildlife/human impact surveys have been compiled.
- A 90m resolution raster elevation map is available.
- The area is extremely cloudy and there are few recent satellite images sufficiently clear to be useable.

3.1.3 Boundaries of existing legal extractive concessions mapped and their status noted.

- Maps of concessions attributed as of 2007 are available (see www.finances.gouv.ga).
- The majority of the zone falls within the CFA concession which has recently been sold. This has been inactive for a number of years but the most recent information is that it has been purchased by a Chinese company who intend to restart exploitation before the end of 2008.
- A portion of the zone falls in the Lot 12 of Leroy Gabon's CFAD. This concessions is scheduled to remain inactive until 2014. However, the company is currently for sale and this may change depending on the objectives of the new owners.

3.2 Ecological

3.2.1 Key wildlife resources

- A survey of wildlife and human impact in adjacent Waka National Park was undertaken in 2005/2006 (Abitsi, 2006) and a survey in 2008 included part of this zone (Maisels et al., 2008). Wildlife densities remain high even in relative proximity to villages; this is contrary to many areas of Gabon and provides a good basis for sustainable management.
- The species list for the zone remains incomplete, but this is not currently a barrier for management planning.

3.2.2 Wildlife migration corridors

- The ridges either side of the Ikobé river have major elephant paths on their summits and local hunters indicate that there is a seasonal movement of elephants between Waka National Park and this zone using them. Indeed, they have in the past used these narrow ridges as chokepoints to hunt elephants. This remains to be studied, but at the least the points where these ridges cross the Sindara-Ikobey road should be priority points for protection activities but the potential impact on crops should also be studied.

3.2.3 Rare and under-represented plant communities

- Surveys by MBG and by the Smithsonian institution have started to provide an outline of the key aspects of the biodiversity of this zone and the adjacent national park, including discovery of new species and identification of a unique 'palm forest' habitat type not known from anywhere else. MBG will provide a review of this information for inclusion in the management plan.

3.2.4 Other floral and faunal resources that are of key importance to the zone and its population

- An ethnobotanical study of the zone has been undertaken by MBG, data is being analysed.

3.3 Socio-economic context

3.3.1 Identify villages, foot paths, transport routes, key economic centers within and around the landscape, agricultural activities, hunting/fishing areas, areas of subsistence level timber extraction.

- Participatory mapping and ground truthing was completed in villages of the zone in 2006 (Bouanga, 2006) and conducted in more detail in 2007 (Abitsi and Lepemangoye-Mouleka, 2007).

- Data from these studies is being compiled prior to inclusion in the draft management plan and will be presented in the stakeholder meetings to be organized in 2008/9 for validation by the local population.

3.3.2 Identify all stakeholders of the zone (including populations outside the zone).

- A stakeholder analysis was undertaken by Bouanga (2006) and Abitsi and Lepemangoye-Mouleka (2007). The results are being compiled for integration into the draft management plan. The main groups of non-government and non-conservation ngo are the local communities (divided broadly into the mitsogho Bantu group and the semi-nomadic Babongo pygmies) and the main logging companies operating in the east of the zone. There are very few other private sector operations in the zone other than logging.
- There are a number of highly influential elites who are based outside the zone (including a current junior environment minister).

3.3.3 Identify those resources and regions of the zone utilized for subsistence purposes vs. larger commercial trade.

- This was assessed by (Abitsi and Lepemangoye-Mouleka, 2007). The lack of regular transport into and out of the zone means that there is currently little commercial exploitation of bushmeat or other forest products. An exception is the collecting of *Garcinia cola*, which is both valuable and durable and so can be collected and stored until a vehicle arrives in the area; this is probably exploited unsustainably.

3.4 Government management authority presence on landscape and capacity to play role in planning process.

- The Ministry of the Interior is represented by a Sous-Prefet of the District d'Ikobey, and the Prefet of Fougamou. Their implication is essential, particularly for all questions relating to the park buffer zone, and both have demonstrated considerable willingness to support the land-use planning process. The Sous-Prefet does not currently have a vehicle and due to lack of communications is currently based in Fougamou, 100 km from the park. To ensure his ability to participate, it will be necessary to ensure that transport is available for the organization of the various public consultation meetings.
- Following the retirement of the first Conservateur there is not currently a Conservateur for Waka National Park, nor any other government park staff. We expect a new Conservateur to be named in Q4 of 2008. As an interim measure, the ANPN has made available members of its Cellule d'Amenagement to represent the government. This is on a punctual basis and workplanning has to take account of that.

4 Creation of a Public Participation Strategy

4.1 Identify those stakeholders that must be included in process; Interested and affected publics.

- The primary local stakeholders to include in the process are:
 1. the local population to the north of the park, including both mitsogho and Babongo members
 2. the logging companies that are or will be active in the area.
- The most significant elites from the zone must also be included (probably via their local representatives).
- At this point there are few other stakeholders actively involved in the park (potential tour operators for example), however over the course of the planning process other stakeholders are likely to arise or be identified. This strategy will therefore be revised as necessary.

4.2 Prioritize which stakeholders should be engaged earliest; based on current activities that pose existing threat to key resources.

- The areas of logging activities and village lands overlap to a large extent (all village zones are within a logging concession, but not all logging concessions contain villages) and it will be ineffective to work with one but not the other. This requires a combined strategy to engage with both the local population and the private sector stakeholders.
- Most human exploitation of the area is currently subsistence-oriented (aside from a small amount of ivory poaching) and does not represent a major immediate threat to the integrity of the forest ecosystems of Waka. The activities of logging companies have the potential to impact the zone most significantly in the near future, through facilitating commercial hunting, social upheaval and impacts on aquatic ecosystems. The four companies involved that need to be engaged (in order of priority) are:
 1. CFA (or rather the Chinese company that has bought the concession)
 2. Bordamur (Rimbunhan Hijau)
 3. Leroy Gabon (low priority for this zone)
- Whilst human impacts are currently low, this could change rapidly, with the opening of new logging roads and a considerable influx of logging company workers into this currently sparsely populated zone. It is important to engage now with the local population with the intention of putting into place mechanisms for sustainable management before these new pressures arrive.

4.3 Describe how to engage with different groups

4.3.1 Different ethnic groups may require different methods of involvement in planning processes.

- The Babongo pygmies who live to the north of the park are a group whose interests have frequently been marginalized. Their mobility, the isolation of their camps and the low level of literacy mean it is difficult for them to engage with external actors and the state apparatus, and make it too easy for other groups to ignore their needs and rights. Whilst there are three recognized Babongo village chiefs, they have no formal representation as a group. To this end, IPACC, a lobbying and advocacy group with a history of experience in similar situations have been engaged to:
 1. provide technical support and mentoring to assist the Babongo in developing a system of representation via one or more associations (ie local NGOs),
 2. to increase their capacity to engage pre-emptively with external actors and
 3. to investigate ways in which Babongo can become involved with the development of the national parks, including development of a system of accreditation for traditional trackers.
- Among the mitsogho (Bantu) population the overall capacity to engage with the land-use planning process is markedly higher, due to a higher level of integration into the wider Gabonese economy. However:
 1. For certain issues, such as community logging, there is a lack of technical information (for example how to estimate the volume of wood in a tree, prices for different woods, rules on minimum diameter etc) that mitigates against sound management and can permit exploitation by unscrupulous outsiders. Traditional/official leaders and community representatives may not be the individuals the best placed to engage in these activities.
 2. Certain groups in the community may have lower capacity to engage either due to lower levels of literacy/awareness or the pressures of other demands on their time. This is particularly the case for groups like adult women, the most intensive hunters (who tend to spend much time in the forest) and traditional healers.
 3. Any community representation is a highly political activity in Gabon and it is important to be aware that representatives' interests may not always be aligned with those of the people they (purport to) represent. It is therefore important maintain channels of communication parallel to the formal system of representation.
- We propose to overcome these difficulties by as well as organizing formal consultation meetings to:
 1. Support the creation of community associations with natural resource management objectives. In other sites, such associations have proven effective at

providing a forum for dynamic members of the community who are otherwise marginalized via traditional or official power structures to have a voice. Once created, supporting their capacity to engage in the technical aspects of sustainable management will be an important component. This will be achieved by a combination of regular village visits by the outreach team and specific training sessions with specialist trainers.

2. Develop and maintain relations with local communities via an outreach and environmental education program. The team visit the villages each week and conduct one or more environmental education classes in the schools. In an area where there is a severe lack of capacity and resources in the education system, this provides a tangible benefit to the villages. The outreach team ‘animateurs’ stay overnight in the villages in which they work and this permits informal information exchange, in both directions. The team comprises a man and a woman, who both speak tsogho. This program was initiated in late 2005, and will continue during the land-use planning process, providing an important mechanism for maintaining information exchange. In an area with such a small population (about 1,000 people) this strategy essentially means that one-on-one discussions can be held with practically every individual inhabitant.
- Supporting the creation and functioning of the Local Management Committee (Comité consultative de gestion locale) provided for in the national parks law, and ensuring that it includes representatives of all major stakeholder groups, is an important mechanism to ensure long-lasting engagement between the park and the local populations even after the end of the project; lobbying to ensure this occurs will therefore be a high priority.
 - Stakeholders external to the zone (such as potential tour operators) are best engaged via meetings of the Technical Management Committee (CTG) or ad-hoc meetings.

4.3.2 Identify willingness of various extractive concession holders to engage in landscape planning process.

- The Malaysian company Rimbunhan Hijau (the largest logging company in the world) is extremely hierarchical. The field staff are often well-trained technicians but they have virtually no decision-making power. While it is important to engage with the local staff, no serious progress will be made unless the senior management of the company (based in Libreville and Malaysia) are engaged. This requires a considerable amount of lobbying at the logging company headquarters.
- The willingness of the new Chinese company to engage in sustainable management is currently unknown. We will organise a meeting with their head office in Libreville to assess this. A large portion of the concession was recently exploited in a

‘coupe familiale’ and it is unclear to what extent the concession is still economically attractive.

4.3.3 Create a process for conflict/dispute resolution between interests/stakeholders.

- The Comité Consultative de Gestion Local for the National Park (foreseen in the parks law of 2007 and scheduled to be create in 2009) will be the main forum for conflict and dispute resolution between the zone and the park.
- OAB-ITTO principles suggest that all companies undertaking sustainable forest management should create a local consultation mechanism to identify and resolve conflicts. We will lobby Bordamur, Leroy Gabon and the new Chinese company to put this into practice and provide technical support as to the composition and functioning of the mechanism.

5 Creation of Strategy for Formal Recognition of Plan

- There is currently little legal basis for management plans for community zones in Gabon. The law provides for both community forestry and village hunting management, but application texts have not yet been published, leaving a gap in the law. The plan will there be a conceptual and voluntary document building a framework collaboration that will be validated by the different actors at a stakeholder meeting.
- Certain aspects of implementation, notably location of series de conservation, village territories and location of infrastructure will be formalised in the various logging company management plans for the area which will be submitted to MINEF for approval.
- Other specific aspects of implementation (for example partnerships between the villages and the logging companies) will be formalised in one or more MoU’s between the different actors involved.
- Prior to formalisation, a wide stakeholder consultation process is required. We envisage three formal public meetings in the Waka area to validate the vision and objectives of the park and the implementation plan. These will include at a minimum representatives of local communities, local government and economic operators active in the surrounding area. Prior and between these meetings, WCS and IPACC will conduct informal village meetings and discussions to allow stakeholders who are unable to attend the formal meetings or who are for whatever reason unable or unwilling to express themselves in a public forum. All these meetings come under the purview of ANPN. The formal public meetings will be facilitated by RAPAC as per the terms of the subcontract. WCS, MBG and IPACC will provide technical input.

6 Creation of Vision and Objectives for the Zone

- The Government of Gabon's vision for the zone is formally set out in the Code Forestier and National Parks law, both of which specify the need for community zones and sustainable management that supports local communities whilst having limited environmental impact.
- Communities have raised many aspects of their vision for zone during village-by-village meetings (Bouanga, 2006; Abitsi and Lepemangoye-Mouleka, 2007, see also mission reports) and an initial draft of specific objectives for the zone, including community-defined objectives will be defined following a stakeholder meeting to be held in Q4 of 2008 or Q1 of 2009.

7 Identify Management Micro-Zones and Associated Objectives and Guidelines

- A participatory mapping programme has produced a preliminary map of areas used by local communities (Bouanga, 2006; Abitsi and Lepemangoye-Mouleka, 2007). This will be presented at stakeholder meetings to be held in Q4 2008 or Q1 2009 for validation/correction following which it will be overlaid with the location of concessions and the park buffer zone to produce a draft micro-zoning plan.
- A particular issue for zoning is that about 15sqkm of the north-eastern corner of the park is used by several families from adjacent villages. A fair solution needs to be found, either permitting customary use of the zone in the park (as a traditional use zone for example), declassifying this part of the park (probably simplest) or finding a fair negotiated settlement. Participatory mapping and surveillance patrols have identified the villages and families involved, whilst wildlife and botanical data is available to provide a comparative assessment of the biodiversity value of this area (high compared to the rest of Gabon, but low relative to the rest of Waka). We will continue to use this information to lobby for an effective settlement to this issue.

8 Elaboration of Implementation Plan for the Zone

- A preliminary list of activities that need to be undertaken to achieve the vision and objectives for the zone to be developed following stakeholder meetings to be held in Q4 2008 or Q1 2009.
- Effectively executing the implementation plan will require implementing a number of livelihoods projects (for example refining and marketing of moabi oil, sustainable honey farming), to provide a meaningful alternative to unsustainable exploitation of bushmeat or other resources. However, this zone is extremely remote and the

current level of funding (USAID + Match) is not sufficient to imitate these activities. We are actively seeking alternative sources of funding.

- The implementation plan has not yet been validated by non-park stakeholders. This will be undertaken during the consultation meetings described in section 4 and section 5 above.

9 Creation of Monitoring Plan for the Zone

- A framework for measuring and evaluating progress towards objectives and the execution of different planned activities will be developed using a logical framework approach including indicators, means of verification and responsibility for execution, once the commonly-agreed objectives have been agreed.

References

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