

FINAL REPORT ON COMMUNITY SENSITIZATION AGAINST UNSUSTAINABLE HUNTING METHODS AND PRACTICES IN THE BAKOSSİ NATIONAL PARK AND KUPE FOREST RESERVE REGIONS OF CAMEROON, ORGANIZED BY CAD IN COLLABORATION WITH RSG, MINFOF AND MINEP FROM 16 - 19TH JUNE 2009.

1. Introduction

CAD led a technical team to field to sensitize a number of communities in and around the Bakossi National Park and the proposed Mount Kupe Integral Ecological Reserve against unsuitable hunting practices from the 16th -19th June 2009 with financial support from Rufford Small Grants Foundation in UK. The technical team which comprised of staff from CAD and the Ministries of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) and Environment and Nature Protection (MINEP) conducted a series of sensitization meetings in Mahole, Ngusi and Bekume involving 116 people from 12 newly identified village communities. While the Bekume participants were made up of solely indigenes, those of Ngusi and Mahole were mixed with both indigenes and immigrants from other parts of Cameroon and neighbouring Nigeria. All the meetings were presided over by the Representative of the Divisional Delegate of Environment and Nature Protection, Mr Ebene Nsako Clement who is a senior forestry and wildlife officer. During this exercise, local populations the first time opportunity to gain knowledge on Cameroon's 1994 wildlife laws and proper use of wildlife resources in our project area. Separate minutes for the meetings exist.

2. Objectives of the Sensitization Process

The broad-based sensitization exercise had as main objective to enhance local population's knowledge and capacities about their rights and obligations in the use of forest and wildlife resources. The specific objectives included:

- To identify those with interest in hunting and bush meat trade and enlist their participation in the management of local wildlife resources.
- To sensitise local populations against unsustainable hunting methods and practices.
- To facilitate the formation of community-based structures for monitoring and controlling illegal wildlife activities.
- To briefly explain the 1994 wildlife policies and regulations to local populations in the project area.

3. Methodology and Approach

All through the sensitisation process, we employed a participatory approach to facilitate sharing and exchange of information on the current fate of local resources as well as obtain first hand solutions proposed by participating communities for their proper use and management. Some of the methods used included: information, discussion, brainstorming, questions and answer sessions, case studies and presentations.

4. Proceedings of the Community-based Sensitization Meetings

Each of the three meetings started with words of welcome from the respective host chiefs, a presentation of agenda and the meeting objectives. In a brainstorming session participants were able to highlight the economic and socio-cultural importance and values of their forest and wildlife resources. Some of the values and importance they attached to forest and wild animals ranged from being a source of meat, food, medicines, varied NTFPs, timber, fuel wood, ecotourism to areas for subsistence agriculture.

The host chiefs expressed gratitude for such an awareness raising activity from CAD and the Government of Cameroon, but frowned seriously at the excessive unscrupulous exploitation of local resources taking place within their communities.

The Coordinator of CAD, Martin Etone thanked all communities for their effective representation at the meetings and allayed people's fears that CAD and the government were coming to seize forests or arrest people for using resources to which they are custodians. He went on by saying that the exercise is simply to educate and sensitize communities on proper use and management of resources and to explain the wildlife policies and regulations to unaware forest-dwelling populations.

In addition, the Representative of the Divisional Delegate for Environment and Nature Protection for Kupe-Muanenguba, Mr Ebene Nsako Clement officially opened the meetings and appreciated the massive turn out of participants. He further extended his sincere appreciation to the Community Action for Development (CAD) and its management for the initiative taken to keep people informed about wildlife regulations and to assist them desist from poor practices of collecting bush meat from forests. In an assuring note, he said the government of Cameroon recognises local use rights over resources and solicited a strong community partnership with the former in their sustainable management.

In the course of meetings, participants discussed in details various hunting methods and practices employed by local populations, advantages and disadvantages of these practices as well as factor pushing people into illegal activities. Some these are shown in Sections 5 and 6 below.

5. Local Hunting Practices and Methods in the Target Region

In a brainstorming exercise, local people were able to enumerate hunting methods and practices commonly in use in the respective communities represented at the meetings.

These included:

- use of fast running hunting dogs;
- night hunting using headlamps;
- use of fire;
- trapping (fence, pit, box, wire, tree top trapping, snares etc);
- team hunting usually with at least 5 hunters camping in the forest for over a week;
- use of nets;

- use of Dane guns(shooting) and Nigerian brands of guns usually without licences;
- gum hunting - a new system discovered at the meeting;
- poisoning of ecosystems - common with fishing and killing animals that eat crops.

While some of these practices were new to the technical team, a good number were seen to have lots of disadvantages than others, thus, the need to discourage them. In addition, this brainstorming exercise led to the discovery of major hunting communities in the project area. Participants also reported cases of immigrant hunters from other parts of Cameroon and Nigeria that hunt down large quantities of wildlife to target urban bush meat markets. Furthermore participants discussed the advantages and risks involved in each practice or method currently in use by the populations as shown in the table below:

| Method /Practice | Advantages | Disadvantages | Remarks from participants |
|---|--|---|---|
| Night hunting with head lamps | Animals shot at very close range Easy | Risk of killing humans Non-selective Risk of getting missing in forest | Prohibited by law and should be avoided completely. |
| Dog hunting | Kills only a few animals Provides bushmeat (food) | Risk of getting lost Open to injury | |
| Fire hunting | Bushmeat (food) | Massively destroys both fauna and flora Non-selective Risk of accidents Can destroy farms and generate conflicts | Prohibited by national and traditional laws. |
| Snares/traps (fence, pit, box, wire, etc) | Food Little income | Non-selective Destroys animals massively Wasteful Tedious | Prohibited by national laws. |
| Spear hunting | Kills one animal at a time Quite selective | Risks of accidents | Permitted by laws. |
| Team hunting | Food, little cash income, | Kills so many animals Non-selective Risk of shooting humans Risk losing of getting lost Tedious | Strictly prohibited by laws. |
| Use of Dane guns (shooting) and other guns | Provides bushmeat for food, little selective, income | Risk of explosion and accidents Hunters can get lost in forest | Dane guns prohibited; other guns permitted if one has licence and hunting permit. |
| Gum hunting. This is new system discovered in the meeting | | | |
| Chemical poisoning | Has no advantage | Non-selective Harmful to human health Harmful to plant and animal health Produces tasteless meat Destroys animals massively | Common with fish and animals and prohibited by national and traditional laws. |

| | | | |
|---------|--|---------------|--|
| Netting | | Non-selective | |
|---------|--|---------------|--|

6. Advantages and Disadvantages of Traditional Illegal Hunting

a. Advantages

During the meeting local communities highlighted a number of advantages in hunting wildlife among which were:

- Protection of crops during animal invasion of crop farms.
- Search for bushmeat for food.
- Cultural values: skin for drum, horns, village totem.
- Provide income.
- Employment for some people who take hunting a sole livelihood activity.
- Social values (meat use for bride price in ancient communities, source of pride).
- Some animals or their parts serve as medicine for some traditional healing systems.

With this presentation participants came up with specific uses of some wild animal species including fur of Beecroft squirrel to cure fire burns, blood of rat moles for eczema, certain barks of trees for sexual stimulation and dispersal of seeds of coffee and palms by small rodents. One of the hunters confirmed this by disclosing that he today enjoys over 25 stems of raffia palm in his farm planted by wild animals. Other issues from discussions showed that some people have taken hunting a routine activity.

b. Disadvantages of Hunting

Despite the above advantages the technical team, together with participants came up with disadvantages associated with hunting including:

- Extinction of species of animals.
- Non-selectivity of animals by age and sex.
- Exposure of defaulters to legal action and punishment.
- Exposure to accidents and eventual loss of lives due to risks associated with this activity.
- Deprivation of young and future generations of knowledge of some animals species.
- Yields very little family income, cannot be inherited and has no pension.
- Interferes with seed dispersal, hence loss in biodiversity.
- Leads to collapse of traditional healing systems relying on wild animal parts and materials.
- It is wasteful, exhaustive, tedious, risky and based on chance.
- Plunges people into abject poverty.

While participants recognised that poor agricultural practices and small-scale logging lead to loss of animal species, hunting was also seen an evil activity due to its non-inheritance. Furthermore hunting was seen to be one of the root causes of marital deutes (especially when wife refuses to cook because the hunter is unlucky to kill animals during a forest trip) as well as disputes between communities, particularly when hunters trespass community forest boundaries. Interestingly trappers were accused of wasting animals species more that those hunting with guns.

7. Brief Explanation of the 1994 Wildlife Policy and Regulations

The representative from the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection for Kupe Muanenguba, Mr Ebene Nsako Clement presented an excerpt of the 1994 wildlife law to local people. He began by quoting the international conventions on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) to which Cameroon is signatory, as the source of inspiration for the enactment of Cameroon's 1994 Forestry, Wildlife and Fishery Laws. He further explained that the wildlife law classifies animals into classes A (totally protected species), B (protected but can be hunted only with gun licenses and hunting permits) and C (hunted freely by local communities only for home consumption and not for sale). However, he remarked that classes A and B animals could be killed in cases of self-defence and crop destruction. But even then, the victim needs to complain and gain authorisation from the technical ministry in charge of Forestry and Wildlife. Some offences and penalties on the victim were presented according to sections as stated in the law as follows:

- Section 154: a fine of 5,000 to 10,000 FCFA or 10 days to 2 months imprisonment or both if you possessed eth skull, skin, bones or any parts of protected species.
- Section 155: a fine of 50,000 to 200,000 FCFA or 20 days to 2 months imprisonment or both in absence of proof of self-defence for killing a protected species within 72 hours (3 days); when hunting without permit and licence; when you exceeding killing limit of class C animals; when circulation of live protected animals; in making video or pictures around protected areas like parks, reserves.
- Section 156: a fine of 200,000 to 1,000,000 FCFA and or 1 to 6 months imprisonment for who ever uses arms or weapons prohibited for hunting as in section 106 and 80.
- Section 158: a fine of 3,000,000 to 10,000,000 FCFA or imprisonment of 1 to 3 years or both for who killing or capture of a protected animal during closed hunting periods, or areas where hunting is prohibited as is the case of protected areas.

According to section 106/80, the following hunting methods and practices are strictly prohibited: team/night hunting using headlamp; use of traps and snares, chemical poisoning, use of fire and Dane guns and illegal sale of bushmeat.

At the end of his presentation, Mr Ebene noted that in communities where legal exploitation resources occurs, local populations have more direct benefits than when resources are illegally exploited. He said benefits or forest revenues (royalties) are partitioned among stakeholders as thus: 10% to village communities surrounding the exploitation area, 40% to the council and 50% to the state.

8. Achievements and Results from Sensitisation Process

- 116 local hunters and bushmeat traders from 12 village communities (with a collective population of over 3000) have been identified and fully sensitised against illegal hunting activities.
- Local populations in the Kupe forest zone are now aware and knowledgeable about the 1994 wildlife laws and its implication in illegal hunting.
- A platform for the creation of 3 new Village Wildlife management committees to check unsuitable hunting has been put in place.
- Three major hunting communities have been identified to be focused on by the project.
- The participation of traditional authorities, government officials and local populations has been gained and enlisted in the project.
- Land and forest tenure problems of local communities have been identified.
- A problem analysis conducted and a checklist of conservation-related problems of communities in general and hunters in particular have been documented.

9. Lessons Learnt

- Poverty is the root cause behind illegal hunting of wildlife.
- Local populations are ignorant about existing national wildlife policies and regulations.
- Local communities have, though undocumented, traditional laws and regulations that favour wildlife management.
- Customary laws and rights of local people are not integrated into existing national forestry and wildlife laws which they claim give government dominance over forest resources.
- Populations living in the forest know and appreciate the value and importance of their resources.
- Local communities do not have sufficient capacities to manage their natural resources.
- Existence of forest tenure conflicts over exploitation of forest and wildlife resources.

- Wildlife collectors are not only from within the project area but also from other parts of Cameroon and neighbouring Nigeria.

10. Recommendations

a. At Community Level

- Local populations need to respect both national and traditional laws that govern hunting and commit to their implementation and reinforcement at the grass root to ensure sustainable use of resources.
- Local communities do have traditional rules that favour wildlife management. There is need therefore for local populations, through traditional administration, to document these customary laws to increase the chances of being taken into account during enactment or revision of national policies and regulations.
- Most hunting communities have limited economic options so that they are pushed into illegal forest activities. There is therefore the need for local populations to engage in alternative micro-enterprises such as beekeeping, snail farming and improved agro-pastoral activities to generate additional family incomes and curb their reliance on traditional hunting.
- For effective reinforcement of wildlife laws and use of resources, local communities must organise into functional village wildlife management committees or groups to check, monitor and control unsustainable practices as well as report cases of victims to traditional administration or the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and Environment and Nature Protection.

b. At the Level of CAD

- Sustain sensitisation and awareness campaigns against poor hunting practices and continue disseminating knowledge of wildlife policies and regulations among forest dependent communities.
- Assist local communities in mapping out their resources as well as farming and hunting areas in use by local populations.
- Encourage the formation of village forest management committees as well as strengthen their capacities in wildlife management.
- Multiple stakeholders with conflicting interest do exist and must work together. It is therefore necessary to conduct a stakeholder analysis to identify various actors involved in the bush meat industry and approaches towards satisfying them.
- Conduct research on primates including hunting and bushmeat market surveys, human-wildlife conflicts to generate information that will inform conservation of primates.

c. At National Level

- Build the capacity of all stakeholders through informal education. the process should seek to empower people to actively solve problems by fostering participation, self-confidence, dialogue, joint decision-making and self-determination in developing a workable national policy and strategy for sound management of wildlife resources.
- There is the need to simplify the process of acquisition of hunting zones and community forest areas to enhance people's access to resources. And where there are protected area, there is the need to carve out areas that permit community access to and use of various resources.
- There is the need to encourage participatory monitoring and control of illegal hunting in the field.
- Need to recognise traditional structures of resource governance. Government needs to recognise the role communities play in achieving better management of land and forest resources such as wildlife. This can lead to the development of policy and legal framework that legitimize local experiences with wildlife management.
- Need to identify and strengthen local institutions such as traditional hunters groups, traditional councils, NGOs and Community-based organisations. The role of such institutions could be modified to meet with emerging challenges in the wildlife sector.

11. Conclusions

This sensitisation process presented the opportunity to note the ignorance of local populations about existing national wildlife legislation that govern the manner in which communities have to use their own resources as well as know their ingenuity in their hunting methods and practices. All the communities sensitised during the process showed that government can take actions integrating customary laws and rights when formulating national forest and wildlife policies and in building local capacities in the management of forest and wildlife resources. From experience gathered from the Mahole, Ngusi and Bekume meetings for instance, all show that unsustainable exploitation of resources is serious in the region, thus, the need to continue this sensitisation process not only in the Kupe area but also to other communities in the entire Kupe-Muanenguba Division.

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In addition, our grateful thanks go to the ministry of forestry and wildlife, environment and nature protection (Divisional Delegation for Kupe-Muanenguba), the local administration, traditional authorities, cad staff and the local people for their varied support and active participation throughout the entire sensitization process.

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