

To: Rufford Foundation (Small Grants Programme)
From: Sustainable Development Associates (SDA)- Cameroon
Subject: Final Report- Betock Community Forest Project¹
Grant Date: 2004
Date: February 2006.

1.0 *Introduction*

This report presents a summary of activities undertaken on the Betock Community Forest Project funded by the Rufford Small Grant for Nature Conservation in the year 2004. The project was carried out between July 2004 and December 2005. It reviews progress in attaining the objectives, challenges and solutions employed, changes effected during project implementation, expenditure and budget analysis and the way forward. But first we recall the initial project objectives set out in the proposal.

2.0 *Project Objectives*

The main project objective was stated as “to facilitate the process of obtaining a community forest by the Betock community situated in the South West Province of Cameroon”.

Specific objectives entailed taking the community through the process of obtaining a community forest including completing the information and awareness raising, consultation and negotiation, designation, delineation and mapping, management planning and submission stages. The project stated the obtention of a “letter of reservation” of the community forest from the Ministry of Forests and Fauna (MINFOF) by the community as the main output of the project.

According to January 1994 law, a “letter of reservation” is granted to a community following an initial application for a community forest. The community needs to concert and show proof of agreement by providing minutes of the community consultation meeting signed by those attending and the Divisional Officer. This is submitted to MINFOF alongside a map of the proposed forest drawn to scale, a description of previous activities carried out in the forest, a curriculum vitae of the community appointed manager and proof of a constituted legal entity that will manage the forest on behalf of the community. Once the letter is received, the community can proceed to develop a management plan for the said forest in view of final approval by government.

¹ By the end of the project the villages changed the project name to the Upper Balong Community Forest Project.

This project was motivated by an expression of interest from the Upper Balong community. The community specifically asked for SDA technical assistance with applying for a community forest through the Upper Balong CUltural and Development Association (UBACUDA). The seven villages that make-up this community had identified the creation of a community forest in adjacent areas during consultations of land use planning (plan de Zonage) Phase IV by the Ministry of Forests and Fauna (MINFOF) in the year 2001.

3.0 Progress

Field activities went on for a period of 18 months between July 2004 and December 2005. We present progress on the basis of activities in the five stages of community forest development namely information and awareness raising, consultation and negotiations, designation, delineation and mapping, submission of application and management planning.

Objective	Achievements	Comments
1) Information and Awareness Raising		
Introductory meetings	Two planning meetings were held with UBACUDA Executive Board members and the Chiefs to plan for the project implementation in order to devise an entry strategy First in Limbe on 21/07/05 And Second in Manyemen on 08/09/05	
Baseline study	A desk study of the area was done in order to better understand the area and compliment the information received during the two introductory meetings Focus group discussions and informal discussions were held with various stakeholder groups to enable proper consideration of their needs in the sensitization process	See appendix 1 for a brief presentation of the community and its forest
Village sensitization meetings	A sensitization workshop was held in each of the seven villages (i.e. Betock, Manyemen, Ebanga, Ayong, Sikam, Osiriyab and Baro) between March and May 2005. The workshops concentrated on presentations and discussions on -Provisions of the 1994 Forest Law and community forest process -Community responsibility in community forest management -Potential benefits of community forestry	These meetings / workshops were indeed helpful in raising awareness as well as other issues that led to failures in a previous community forest initiative in the community.

	-Developing a participatory work plan for the various activities in these communities.	
2) Designation, delineation and Mapping	Between April and May 2005, forest walks and semi-structured interviews were carried out to designate and describe the intended community forest areas. GPS point surveys were carried out to map the intended community forest.	At the end of farms and the forest (the farm/forest interface) a 1 km buffer zone was allowed from all paths used in the GPS survey to constituted all four-boundary points of the forest. (The map is currently at the National Institute of Cartography for certification)
3) Consultation and Negotiations	<p>-Between June and July 2005 pre-consultation meetings were held in all the seven villages to sensitize the communities on the details of the consultation meeting proper and also with other officials including the Senior Divisional Officer for Kupe Manenguba, The Divisional Officer for Nguti Sub-Division, the Divisional Delegate for Forests and Fauna (MINFOF) Kupe Manenguba and all the village chiefs.</p> <p>-A public announcement of the consultation meeting date and intentions was prepared in accordance with provisions of the community forest and posted in all the villages concerned for a period of 45 days</p> <p>-The final consultation meeting was held on August 27, 2005.</p>	
4) Preparation and Submission of Application file	<p>The application file for the community forest has been completed.</p> <p>As soon as the map is certified, the application would be submitted</p>	If in six months the letter of reservation is not received from MINFOF, the community can consider their application granted a go ahead with the development of management plan.

4.0 Challenges and Solutions adopted

During the 18 months of the implementation of the project, a number of challenges were faced including, community conflicts emanating from a stifled community forestry acquisition process, the issue of bigger and more influential villages dominating smaller ones, and the inability of communities to make own financial contribution to the project as agreed.

Conflict emanating from a previous community forestry project: During the initial sensitization phase of the project, it came to our notice that a local Common Initiative group by name REPACIG, having as secretary a chief of one of the biggest villages in the area, who also doubles as local representative of a timber company called CAFECO had initiated a community forest acquisition process with the sponsorship of his company. However, several villages and community members were against this project, and as such had written to government and the process was stalled. Several people in these communities thus viewed those coming in for community forest activities with suspicion, owing to the previous experience. This posed lots of problems but things got better with the sensitization meetings and the participatory approach adopted by SDA during the project. In view of avoiding long-term conflicts the community forest was designated in an area different from the area covered by the REPACIG-CAFECO community forest project.

Dominance of larger villages over small ones: Some smaller villages expressed fear of dominance by larger villages in case of a joint community forest initiative. Sekam and Osiriyab villages wanted to create a separate community forest. These positions did not only give motivation for reinforcement of the participatory approach plan for the project but also inspired and justified the introduction of a representative system in the community forest management committee. Such safeguards were considered secure for these small villages and as such encouraged their involvement in subsequent project activities. More importantly Sekam and Osiriyab villages decided to join the other villages.

Inability of community to make timely contribution to project as planned: It was envisaged and agreed with UBACUDA that the community will contribute 900 man-days for clearing forest boundaries but this was not provided in a timely manner and in sufficient quantity. It took extra work and about two months of mobilisation to get the job done. This meant more cost for project staff.

5.0 Changes to Project arising during project implementation

The main change seen during the implementation of the project was a change in the name of the project. The name was changed from **Betock Community Forest project** to **Upper Balong Community Forest Project**. This is owing to the argument by the community that if all seven Upper Balong Villages are to be involved in the project, then the project should not carry the name of one village or a sub-group of villages. They favoured the name, which was acceptable to all.

6.0 Expenditure versus Budget

Description	Budget					Expenditure		
	Qty	Unit cost	Betock	SDA	Rufford	Qty	SDA	Rufford
1. Materials								
Paint for forest demarcation in 50 litre containers)	15	65			975	15		975
Metal buckets for boundary demarcation	120	3			360	110		330
Brushes	120	1			120	110		110
Machetes and files	120	4			480	110		440
Flip chart board	2	85			170	2		170
Roll of flip chart paper	15	11			165	15		165
Markers (packets)	20	4,5			90	20		90
Exercise books	125	0,3			37,5	125		37,5
Ball point pens	125	0,1			12,5	125		12,5
Sub total 1					2 410			2330
2. Production of community forest map								
Clearing of forest boundaries (man days)	600	1,5	900					
Facilitation (man days)	85	25		2125		90	2125	125
Hire of GPS and GIS (days)	12	20		240		12	240	
Printing of forest maps	20	35			700	18		630
Printing of forest management plans	10	15			150			0
Printing of management agreements	10	15			150			0
Sub total 2			900	2 365	850		2365	755
3. Transport								
Local public transport to Betock for project team (trips)	56	30			1680	61		1830
Totals			900	2 365	4 940			4915

No expenditure was incurred on the Management plan and agreement lines because the project did not get up to that point in the process. However, additional expenses were incurred on transportation and on facilitation given the challenges faced by the project as in section 4.0.

7.0 Next Steps

The community now awaits the letter of reservation from the Ministry of Forests and Fauna (MINFOF). Thereafter they can proceed to develop the management plan. Discussions have been going on and the Upper Balong Cultural and Development Association is determined to take that forward. They have demonstrated sufficient motivation and SDA is willing to work with them if they provide the minimum of required resources.

Appendix 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMUNITY

Location:

The Upper Balong community is located in the Kupe Muanenguba Division, South West Province and includes the villages of Ayong, Baro, Betock, Ebanga, Manyemen, Osirayib and Sekam (See map). These seven villages all fall in the “support zone”¹ of the Korup National Park.

Population and Ethnicity:

The Upper Balong community constitutes a population of about 2500 people (Buthcher, C. 1997). The population is unevenly distributed with Manyemen and Ebanga being the most populated with populations of about 800 and 600 people respectively. Manyemen has a cosmopolitan population with the indigenous Balong and grass field tribes being the most dominating. Another prominent settler group is the Nigerian population. Ebanga is dominated by the Balong and Ngolo tribes. Sekam is the next largest and mixed village with about 280 people, the Balong and Ngolo tribes dominating. Betock, Baro, Osirayib and Ayong are smaller and have a more homogenous population (the Balong tribe).

Socio-economic activities:

The main economic activity of the area is farming. Cocoa and coffee are the major cash crops cultivated while food crops like plantains, cocoyam, banana and cassava are cultivated both for cash and subsistence. Almost every household of the area is involved in the farming activity. The main agricultural system is slash and burn based on shifting cultivation. Livestock domestication is common and is done for both commercial and subsistence purposes. Major species include goats, pigs, poultry and sheep.

Other livelihood supporting activities in the area include petit-trading, hunting, fishing and gathering of Non-timber forest products. Such products collected either for cash or home consumption include Bush mango (*Irvingia gabonensis* and *Irvingia wombulu*), Eru (*Gnetum africana*), Njansang (*Rhicinodendron heudoloti*). Mostly women and youths do gathering of forest products and this contributes significantly in improving household income.

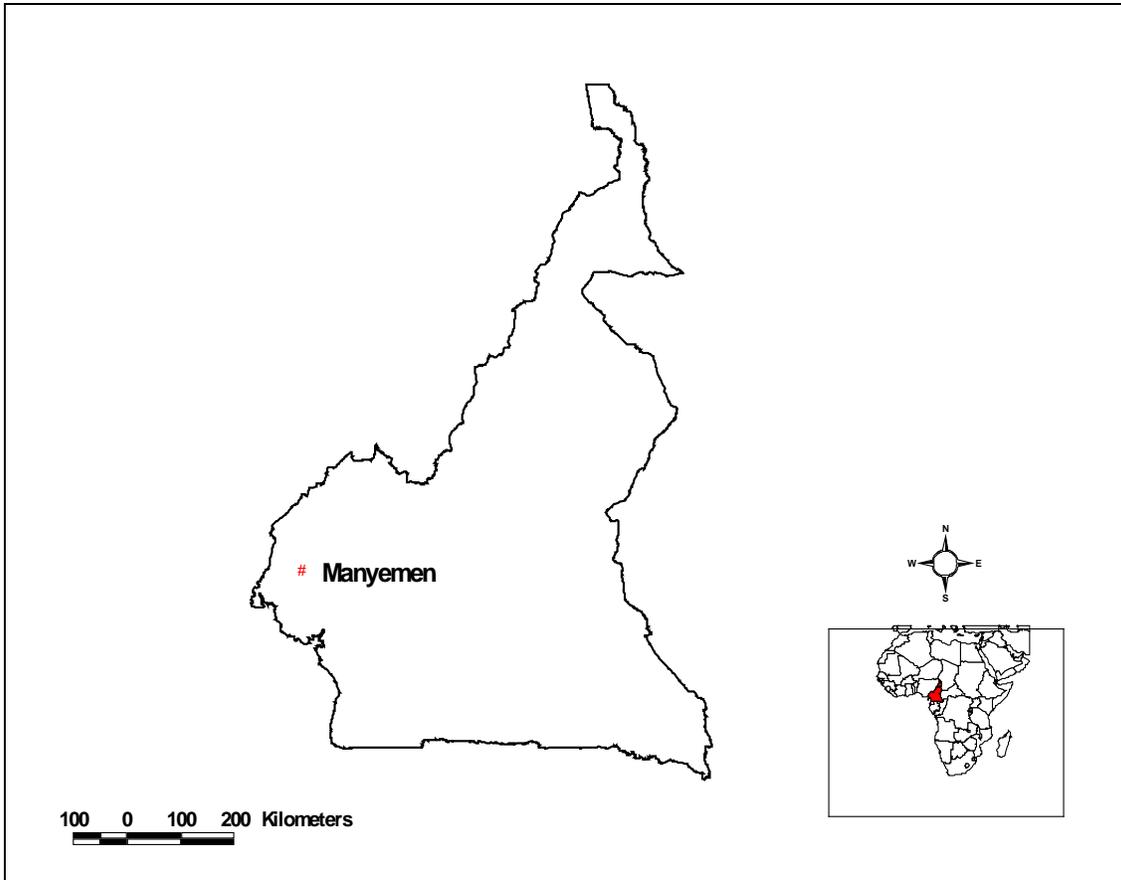


Figure 1: Map of Cameroon showing the location of the Central project village

Timber is also becoming very important as a valuable forest resource in the area attracting logging operations from licensed timber companies (CAFECO and “BIZOUR”). Manyemen is a major Bush meat market in the region.

Amenities:

Ebanga, Manyemen and Betock are linked by paved road (the Kumba-Mamfe road) while seasonal earth roads access the other four villages. Three of the villages (Ebanga, Manyemen and Betock) have pipe borne water. In the other four villages where pipe borne water is absent, drinking water is fetched from rivers and streams. Manyemen and Ayong have community health facilities and Manyemen village alone has access to non-

permanent thermal electricity. Ayong, Baro, Manyemen and Ebanga have primary schools.

Socio-political setup.

Villages have the chief as the head of the village and the traditional council as the main decision making body. The traditional council is constituted of elderly indigenous people. Where the chief is absent in the village, the regent who works in close collaboration with the traditional council deputizes him.

Institutions:

Village institutions are mainly cultural or social groups (see annex 1). The main cultural groups are Ekpe, Nganya and Nyankpe. Social groups are mostly farmers groups and unions of members carrying out a common activity e.g. drivers union. There is a conspicuous absence of government institutions in the area.

APPENDIX II

Sample photos of sensitization Meeting at Manyemen Village

