

## **Project Update: October 2010**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

From the 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> October 2010, Community Action for Development (CAD) organised a series of community-based sensitisation meetings (in Muaku, Ndibse and Nteho) against illegal hunting and bushmeat trade with some communities in the Bakossi Landscape. Besides identifying more hunters and dealers in bushmeat in the region, the meetings aimed at fostering suitable hunting practices, addressing the plight of endangered species and explaining government policy and laws on wildlife exploitation. Over 68 people including hunters, traditional chiefs and councillors and staff from the Ministries of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), Environment and Nature Protection (MINEP) and CAD took part in the sensitisation exercise. Throughout the process, emphasis was being laid on government's policy on the protection of wildlife, which also encourages local communities to take leadership in the rational use and management of their own resources. In addition to preliminary explanation of some aspects of the wildlife law, participants also defined community-specific strategies for controlling and monitoring unsustainable hunting practices and set up follow-up committees to work towards the creation of wildlife management groups or associations in the project area.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE SENSITISATION MEETINGS**

The objectives of the sensitisation exercise were:

- To identify those with interest in hunting *and bushmeat* trade;
- To sensitise local populations against unsustainable hunting methods and practices;
- To form community-based structures for monitoring and controlling local hunting activities.

### **3.0. LOCAL PEOPLE'S INTEREST IN THE FOREST**

In an interactive session with Martin Etone, local people enumerated some resources they often wish to extracting each time they visit the forest. These included:

- Honey
- Bushmeat including primate species
- Termites and fogs frogs;
- Mushroom, Chewing stick;
- Bush ropes and rattan cane for fencing and basketry;
- Sand,
- Fire wood and timber;
- Medicine e.g *Croton aubreville* (ndoume) ;
- NTFPs: *Recinodendron heulodotii* (njangsang), *Piper guineensis* (bush pepper), *Gnetum africana* (Eru), *Garcinia kola* (bitter kola), *Garcinia sp* (Ngu), etc.

#### 4.0 MEETING PROCEEDINGS

Following introduction of participants and words of welcome from various host Chiefs, local people were briefed on the role of the CAD/RSG Participatory Wildlife project and orientated on the project's implementation strategy. The Project Coordinator, Mr. Martin N. Etone, emphasized the project's need to identify those with interest in hunting and sale of *bushmeat*; facilitate community organization and improve local awareness and knowledge of sustainable wildlife management and existing wildlife regulations. In addition, this project addresses issues of poverty through the provision of alternative livelihood options while mobilising community efforts in campaigning against abusive exploitation of wild animal resources and in the field implementation of wildlife policy/laws in the Muanenguba and Bakossi forest regions. It is worth noting that though primary focus is on highly endangered species such as gorillas, drills, chimpanzees and monkeys keen attention is equally given to other species currently under severe threats and enjoy legal protection.

The sensitisation process was also characterised by detailed analysis of local hunting practices and a preliminary introduction of some aspects of Cameroon's wildlife law. With the Divisional Chief of Environment and Nature Protection for Kupe-Muanenguba Division, Mr. Ebene Nsako Clement as facilitator, local people enumerated a series of hunting practices, many of which are non-selective and prohibited by law. These include: trapping, chemical poisoning of animals and streams, team and night hunting using headlamps, use of fire, hunting dogs and Dane guns. Reasons advanced for the above activities range from the desire to protect crop farms from wild animal destruction to social, economic and cultural reasons such as income, food, medicine and use of skins as ornaments in homes and the production of local drums

Furthermore, emphasis was laid on government's policy on the protection of wildlife, which encourages local communities to play a leading role in the rational use and management of their own resources without compromising the needs of present and future generations and the need to break the existing local people's ignorance of forest regulations and approaches that preserve the wildlife resource-base.

The representative from the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife went further to explain the legal requirements of the 1994 law relating to hunting. He emphasized on classification of animals by law into **Class A** (enjoy total protection), **class B** (protected but could be hunted only with permits or authentic authorization), **and Class C** (partially protected and allowed for acceptable traditional hunting) and the necessary modalities for hunting animals of various classes. With respect to local hunting practices, the Chief of Wildlife explained the disadvantages of each of these methods to local populations and animals as well as reasons why they are prohibited by law. Some of the disadvantages of unsustainable hunting practices included:

- Extinction of animal species;
- Deprivation of young and future generations of knowledge of some animal species;
- Yields very little family income, cannot be inherited and has no pension;
- Interferes with seed dispersal;

- It is exhaustive, tedious, risky and chance activity.

## **5.0 FORMATION OF FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEES**

During the sensitisation process, each of the communities formed a follow-up Committee comprising of five members. Eight of such committees have been put in place to set the pace for the creation of local wildlife management groups or associations to henceforth monitor the hunting activities of the local people. Each of these committees had as an assignment to:

- Facilitate the holding of a constituent meeting involving Chiefs, traditional councillors, hunters and *bushmeat* sellers during which to elect an executive bureau;
- Assist in the drawing up of a draft constitution for the group;
- With assistance from CAD and MINFOF, follow-up the legal recognition of the group
- Forward draft Constitution and list of members to CAD and MINFOF.

## **6.0 ACHIEVEMENTS AND RESULTS**

- Three community- based sensitization meetings have been successfully organised.
- Raised awareness of additional 68 people including 41 men, 15 women and four youths against unsustainable hunting and illegal sale of bushmeat, clarifying the disadvantages of each of the practices used for the well being of local people and wild animals species currently under serious threats.
- Local participation in the effective implementation of the project has been enlisted and encouraged.
- A series of community-specific strategies to enhance monitoring and control of local hunting practices have been elaborated.
- Three follow-up committees (each with five members) have been set up as pace-setters for the eventual creation and fictionalisation of local wildlife management groups and associations that would take leadership in the control and monitoring of unsustainable hunting practices in the project area.
- Local populations have been kept aware of practicable alternative livelihood options that exist other than hunting, especially as the latter is not a live-long activity and without any pension.

## **7.0 GENERAL STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MEETINGS**

During each of the meetings local people brainstormed on possible strategies that would improve local livelihoods as well as foster sustainable wildlife management in the area.

These included the following:

- Introduction of Alternative Income Generating Activities such as livestock production, bee keeping, and micro-business enterprises to local populations;
- Introduction of wildlife domestication with focus on grass cutters and snails;
- Increasing local participation in wildlife management through the creation of community hunting zones;

- Intensify and sustain community sensitisation and campaigns efforts against current unsustainable hunting practice and the sale of bushmeat in all the villages in the project area;
- Need to put in place functional local wildlife management structures (groups/associations) to monitor and control local hunting activities in the project area;
- Need to keep local communities in the project area aware of the legal provisions of the 1994 wildlife law through regular explanations and simplification of policies and regulations governing the exploitation of wildlife resources in Cameroon.
- Provide conservation education in primary schools, colleges and whole communities in order to help people know the importance of their wildlife heritage to their very existence and the need to preserve it.
- The need to promote all traditional norms that favour wildlife use and management;
- Carry out identification of animals species killed and their current status;
- Embark on the rehabilitation of degraded forest landscapes/habitats through tree planting.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

Raising awareness among forest-dwelling populations on the devastating effects of unsustainable hunting practices remains vital in achieving sustainable wildlife management. While these efforts must be consolidated in communities already reached, there is need to extend these efforts to many village communities in the project area. In addition, this sensitisation process helped to generate useful background information for the workshop that will soon hold on the 1994 wildlife law in particular and the entire project as a whole. We sincerely thank the Rufford Small Grants Foundation for the financial support given CAD for this project and it is our hope that this collaboration grows from strength to strength. In addition, our grateful thanks go to the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (Divisional Delegation for Kupe-Muanenguba), our staff and the local communities for their various support and full participation throughout the sensitisation process.