

**Enhancing equity in the relationship between protected areas and indigenous  
and local communities in Central Africa, in the context of global change**

**Final Report**

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Report for TILCEPA

## Overview

This report summarises the findings of a review of community involvement in the creation and management of protected areas across Central Africa sponsored by TILCEPA. This work is part of a process to identify the key challenges and opportunities confronting direct community involvement in the management of biodiversity in Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville<sup>1</sup>, the Central African Republic, Gabon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda, to feed into a global review of Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) organised by the IUCN CEESP. The cases highlighted in this report on Central Africa have been identified through email consultations with contacts from conservation projects, NGOs and local and indigenous communities who are involved in collaborative conservation projects at different levels, and a review of the accumulating literature describing new ways in which local communities are engaged to manage forests in their areas.

Several factors underlie this work.

1. First, community-collaborative approaches to protected areas by conservation organisations are a relatively new phenomenon in Central Africa, with data on cases where it is actually happening in the field often piecemeal and dispersed, buried in project reports, or in the notes of field staff.
2. Greater information is available on local involvement in forest management, so-called Participatory Forest Management (PFM), outside of IUCN classes I-IV, where many of the most innovative institutional evolutions government and civil society concerning forest management have been documented, and;
3. Documentation on cases where local and indigenous people are actually managing forest resources autonomously is rare, dispersed, and difficult to generalise between contexts, but the examples serve to highlight the central role communities can play in the management of protected areas in Central Africa.

This report refers to a range of examples where communities have been involved in the “designation, regulation or management of a geographically defined area to achieve specific conservation objectives” (our working definition of CCAs), and summarises the key characteristics and challenges presented by them.

## Community Land Tenure

For many forest dwelling communities in Central Africa, the forest is treated as a common resource, with low competition between users, and few mutual restrictions on use or commercial exploitation, particularly where population densities remain very low. Some indigenous and local communities relying primarily on hunting and gathering have developed certain cultural conventions governing family or clan control over certain parts of the forest, and also their own fluid wildlife management regimes, but the costs to powerful outsiders of accessing the lands covered by these community-based rules are often very low.

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<sup>1</sup> Cases of CCAs in the Republic of Congo under preparation.

Many communities who rely on agriculture as their main livelihood activity assert claims to wide sections of forest around their communities, without exercising any formal institutional defence against outsiders who come to hunt commercially, log or mine. The situation is similar where “sacred forests” form part of local communities’ cosmologies but they have no effective way to stop more powerful outside interests coming in to exploit them. In much of Central Africa many of the problems local communities face in protecting and managing what they may consider to be “their” forest resources are rooted in the existence of a weak State institutions, highly centralised laws governing the exploitation of forest resources, and a lack of accountability over the allocation and regulation of state-sanctioned extraction rights. Much of the Central Africa forest region that is not already allocated to specific conservation regimes is slated for allocation to extractive interests (Forest Monitor, Global Forest Watch). Cameroon’s forest zoning map,<sup>2</sup> the source of much debate by NGOs and civil society organisations, is a good illustration of the reality faced by communities who rely upon forests to secure their livelihoods – they disappear into a mosaic of Production Forests and Forest Reserves.

Box 1: Bulu and Bagyeli Land Tenure, Cameroon

Bulu land tenure follows hierarchical organisation based upon the “droit de hache” model, where original settlers or their kin assert proprietary rights over land, and allocate it according to customary rules, in line with many other models found elsewhere in agrarian Africa. Access to land is restricted to kin, and strangers must negotiate access. The sale of land is rare, although the rights to it are inheritable, and divisible (eg rights to cultivate versus rights to harvest tree products). In addition, the scope and strength of rights may be tempered by the land typology; rights to cropped lands are more stringent than those to high forest. Bagyeli “Pygmy” communities can live in close association with Bulu communities, and their customary tenure concepts revolve around rights to lands where they live with mainly agrarian and trading communities, and the forest and high forest, where they assert clan rights to certain areas, but accommodate outsiders if yields are shared and conditions of use are respected. Cameroon’s 1994 Forest Law contradicts these longstanding and sometimes contradictory arrangements through its limited definition for agricultural lands, whose rights are to be acquired through the *mise en valeur* principle which is protected by national law, and forest lands, which fall into a government protected and regulated category which may be allocated to commercial and conservation interests, often from outside the area. Contradictions between the State and local rules of this nature allow for the potential destruction of customary land tenure arrangements that have been operating for generations, a fate which has befallen many communities in Cameroon.

Berg, J (2000); Berg and Biesbrouck (2000); Nelson (2001/2).

In most forest regions in Central Africa, the most effective decentralised community control and management of land centres around cultivated areas encompassing mainly settled communities, where the “*mise en valeur*” principle applies and individuals or households can secure more or less permanent use rights to lands that they have built on, or put into production. In addition, there is a slow movement towards participatory forest management (PFM) that reflects wider policy changes across the

<sup>2</sup> APEC

continent; their evolution strongly linked to changes to State legislation governing the management of forests.<sup>3</sup> The advent of “Community Forests” in Cameroon since the 1994 legal reform was a good example of this positive trend, but so far lands attributed to Community Forests cover an insignificant proportion of the total forest estate across the region.

Conservation legislation in most Central African countries was initiated during the colonial period. Much of this body of law tended to centralise power over all natural resources within national State institutions, and most countries in the region adopted the same or similar protection measures at independence. Despite various legal reforms that forest and wildlife legislation has undergone since then in Central Africa, in practice the basic approach has remained the same, namely to exclude local and indigenous communities from any direct involvement in the creation or management of protected areas, particularly national parks, which under the laws of the region are protected from all exploitative resource extraction, including for subsistence purposes.

Over the past ten years, due to the encouragement and lobbying by development and human rights organisations, the increasing problems and escalating costs associated with traditional conservation models, and the growing realisation of the potential benefits to conservation from working with communities, some conservationists have begun to accept the need in Central Africa to involve local people in their conservation plans. Since the mid-1990’s conservation projects have begun to involve local people more in their projects, however few have involved communities fully in the development and implementation of their management plans for conservation areas – the so-called “co-management” option. Since 1998 the IUCN has supported around a dozen conservation projects in the Congo Basin to explore different co-management approaches in Cameroon, DRC, Congo-Brazzaville and CAR, through training and networking between “observation sites” where new approaches were being used, and these cases are an important source of lessons relevant to this review (Borrini-Feyerabend et. al., 2001). However, recent work highlights that less than one percent of Africa’s forest estate comes under community-based or state-community based management (Alden-Wily, forthcoming), and anecdotal evidence so far suggests that in Central Africa this figure is likely to be much lower. In this regard, in the Central African Region the law matters: in DRC, Cameroon, CAR, Gabon and the Republic of Congo 100% of land is officially administered by the governments concerned (White and Martin , 2002).

In spite of the current low level of participation by communities in the management of forests across Central Africa, examples where local and indigenous communities are involved in conservation can be identified in every country in the region. Their existence is often owed to changes in laws over forests, wildlife and other natural resources, to pressure from international development and conservation organisations, and sometimes to local enthusiasm for conservation.<sup>4</sup> In Africa generally there has been a remarkable evolution of land tenure norms over the past few decades, with a trend towards the devolution of power to communities, and the persistence of customary land tenure regimes amongst rural communities has pushed some policymakers across the continent to examine how to “re-institutionalise” customary

<sup>3</sup> New forest laws in Central Africa since 1990: Cameroon, CAR, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Uganda (draft), DRC (draft), Congo (draft). Source: Alden Wily (2001).

<sup>4</sup> Eg. Kilum-Ijim Community Forest, Mount Cameroon Project, Cameroon. See Gardner et al.

land tenure norms within new legal provisions (Alden Wily, 2002; Bruce and Migot-Adholla, 1988:37). However in most Central African countries this trend is much slower than elsewhere.

Where increased community participation in the management of conservation is occurring it is usually tied to legal changes linked to the institution of new modes of legal land-holding by communities (e.g., Community Forests) within the highly centralised land control regimes which persist across the region. Where conservation rules have been formalised, i.e. State sanctioned, and parks or reserves have been created, some conservation agencies have attempted to engage with communities, or been forced to do so due to conflict with local interests, or in the context of trying to secure communities' commitment to parks' own conservation goals, or simply to secure other forms of funding from donors who target "sustainable development" initiatives. Some of these conservation projects have developed benefit-sharing schemes to provide increased incentives to communities to collaborate with their conservation strategies over what had been, in communities' eyes, at least, community "controlled" lands. In addition, a minority of conservation projects also have attempted to consult with a cross section of the local community over gazettelement or management plans, or to develop new community-orientated structures to "*faire participer*" the local population, but few have devolved actual management roles – and many still lack the necessary incentives and skills to make this happen without reinforcing an inequitable allocation of forest rights, at the root of many community conservation problems across the region.

Alden-Wily (2001:11) identifies two key approaches to participatory forest management in Africa that can also be used to segregate approaches to conservation projects, including PFM initiatives, in Central Africa. This is a typology that allows analysis of community involvement to go beyond what have now become standard spectra of "degrees of participation." Alden-Wily distinguishes between "benefit-sharing approaches", where communities are identified as beneficiaries, users and rule-followers, and "power sharing approaches," where communities are identified as managers, decision-makers and rule makers. The distinction between these two paradigms is an important one in the context of community conservation in Central Africa, as where one approach aims to gain cooperation with communities in management, the other aims to devolve management to them – an underlying premise of the CCA concept. Understanding how different conservation projects approach community participation and power devolution in conservation project using this distinction is extremely useful if we are to differentiate between approaches, challenges and opportunities for community-based conservation across the region, as demanded of this review.

Power sharing with communities requires the devolution of decision-making structures so that communities can have a direct input, and so that conservation decisions about, for example, community access to protected areas, can be made and implemented without excessive recourse to central government - there are few legal mechanisms in the region which allow this to happen. Community Forests (see below) is one example of how this can take place in an albeit limited and time constrained way, and other forms of formal cooperation with communities are now being asserted by various projects (see below boxes). However many communities need help and advice to engage effectively with government agencies and NGOs, and

few conservation organisations have dedicated adequate resources and genuine commitment to support the full participation by local communities in decisions about the management of their local environment. This is especially true where outside conservation agencies have secured official approval for their conservation initiatives over these lands.

### **Challenges and Options for Action (What can we do about it?)**

The rest of this working document is taken up with a review of the key challenges to promoting more equitable relationships between indigenous and local communities and protected areas, along with an initial review of the opportunities that exist to overcome them. This list of challenges is not yet comprehensive, nor totally refined, as new experiences are constantly being documented, so we have tried to identify key challenges and areas for change, along with possible case study examples which serve to highlight both the problems faced, and positive ways forward. Four key areas of change have been identified, including:

- Community Participation in Conservation
- Legal Reform
- Participatory Forest Management and Integrated Conservation and Development
- Capacity-Building

These areas are addressed in turn below.

## Community Participation in Conservation

**Challenge:** Community Conserved Areas, where resident communities have a greater or equal input to the State in conservation plans are very rare in Central Africa, especially in regions where extractive and conservation interests are active, and they are weakly appreciated by conservationists.

**Options:** Highlight examples where communities have developed autonomous conservation regimes. Draw lessons from these cases and those where communities and conservation organisations have worked together to establish and manage conservation zones, including in locations where armed conflict prevails. Use these to generate guidelines for enabling the recognition of local and indigenous communities' own conservation regimes.

**Challenge:** Where communities are involved conservation initiatives, their participation is usually a component of State or NGO sponsored projects in which

### Box 2: Tayna Gorilla Reserve, DRC

The Tayna Gorilla Reserve located in North Kivu, DRC was created in 1999 through a collaboration between conservation agencies and two traditional leaders of the Batangi and Bamate people. The Statutes for this "Community Based Reserve" of 800 sq km constitute a formal agreement between the customary landholders, government and NGOs. Local people directly participate in the management of this protected area, whose goals includes both the conservation of biodiversity and the promotion of rural development. In this region of ongoing armed conflict, the Tayna forest guards are unarmed, and repressive protection measures are not employed by them. Communities have been directly involved in the development of the Reserve's management plan, including to establish a forest zoning plan and to address the long-term development of the park. The Reserve programme recognises the key role that continuing, customary use of the whole region shall play in the long-term management and conservation of the forest habitat. Key dilemmas faced by this project is the degree to which unauthorized use by outsiders can be prevented during periods of political instability, and how to include the local "Pygmy" population, who have so far been marginalised in the process of establishing this initiative.

Tasinzanzu (2002), Kakule (2002)

### Box 3: Batoufan Sacred Forests, Cameroon

Batoufan is located in Western Cameroon, and is an area controlled by around 100 independent chiefdoms who possess and guard a series of sacred forests through various community-based and secret societies. Many of these forests are of high biodiversity value, and different types of forest possess different cultural and spiritual status for the communities concerned. Access to these sacred forests is strictly controlled by community institutions, but community members can enter either to collect key medicines by sacred healers or through limited annual access, when all community members can enter to harvest a wide range of products. Key dilemmas faced by this community based conservation model include the diversification of cultural norms due to immigration to the zone, which are tending to dilute the authority of the customary system, and the conflicting rules between national forest and conservation laws, and customary protection measures and spiritual practices.

Tchouama (2002)

local communities do not possess significant management power.

Box 4: Lake Mburo National Park, Uganda

The establishment of Lake Mburo National Park resulted in strong antipathy between the conservation agencies involved and local communities, notably due to their forced expulsion when the park was declared in 1983. Communities have continued to believe that the park resources are theirs by right, and that they were unfairly excluded from using “lands and resources over which they have right” when the park was demarcated. They have continued to operate in the park to fulfil many of their subsistence requirements, even though this is technically forbidden under park rules. In recent years the Park has begun to try to work more closely with local communities to “co-manage” park, through the Lake Mburo Community Conservation project, and it was the first protected area in Uganda to employ community conservation officers. The officers’ role is to raise public awareness of conservation issues, increase local participation in the parks’ conservation activities, and to support community development initiatives as and when they arise. Even though this programme has not solved the basic problem relating to the communities’ perception of the park, and their continued pressure on park resources, it has helped to open avenues of dialogue between local communities and the park authorities, which may help them develop new ways of working together in the future.

Infield and Namara (2001), Emerton (1999)

Options: Promote community participation in the development of conservation projects, either through direct participation in the development of plans, or via new institutional forms which enable communities’ views to be fully considered, and also permits customary access to and use of State protected areas.

Box 5: Itombwe Forest and Kyavirimu Gorilla Project, DRC

In South Kivu traditional authorities around the Itombwe Forest have signed up to agreements to demarcate core protected areas, buffer zones and development areas on land over which they have exercised their traditional rights. The agreements were the outcome of extensive community consultations by several NGOs, during which communities agreed to work with NGOs on socio-economic development activities based upon sustainable use of the remaining natural resources of Itombwe. The Kyavirimu Gorilla Project covers the 3000m “Mountain of Spirits,” Kyavirimu, an important gorilla habitat facing intense pressure from the burgeoning population who rely on the zone for their livelihood and to engage in spiritual rites. Here a local NGO, “CADAK” is working to involve communities living around the mountain in sustainable development activities which will protect the mountain’s resources upon which they rely. In both of these cases, the lack of community capacity has been cited as a key constraint to the work, a persistent remark amongst protected area managers, many of whom may prefer to work with literate local community members who already have some understanding of and skills for the bureaucratic requirements of their participation.

M’Keyo (2002), Tasinzanzu (2002), Pavasa (2002)

Challenge: Communities are often very poorly represented in the development and implementation of conservation project management plans. This is rooted in low



levels of community consultation by conservation project managers, and tendencies for them not to differentiate between information provision and participation, and to confuse communities as users, rather than as managers.

Options: Highlight how communities have been involved and benefited from better representation in the development and implementation of conservation projects, the benefits to conservation projects from this increased participation and consultation, and the weakness in existing processes. Highlight ways in which benefit-sharing can play a role in equalising the roles of communities *vis a vis* conservation project managers, and how negotiated access to selected park resources can provide a platform for dialogue between conservation agencies and local communities.

Box 6: Lobeke and Boumba National Parks, Cameroon

Lobeke National Park in South East Cameroon was established in 1999 over lands which local communities had previously been using to secure their livelihoods, and which also had been under threat from sustained logging pressures from outside. Boumba Park adjoins the Boumba River to the Northwest of Lobeke National Park. The two parks' proximities to CAR and Northern Congo is associated with intense commercial bushmeat and trophy hunting. Several safari companies operate in the area, and live parrots, ivory and other illegally obtained forest resources are regularly obtained in or smuggled through the zone. The population in Moloundou District, which adjoins both the Boumba and Lobeke zones is 65% Baka, who rely on hunting and gathering as their main livelihood, and who may spend a significant part of their year in hunting camps far away from the road. Baka in the Southeast live in close association with more settled Bagando who tend to have larger plantations and gardens nearer the main transport axes, and recent migrants, including traders or workers for the various logging concessions in the zone. Lobeke National Park is significant in that international conservation NGOs negotiated with the Cameroon government to obtain legal, controlled access for local communities to a portion of the park for subsistence purposes, which under normal circumstances is contrary to the law of Cameroon. This significant agreement was partly informed by community consultations that the conservation agencies, including WWF, GTZ, and government employees of MINEF held with communities across the zone. Current plans by these agencies are to ensure that each of the zones in the areas between the parks are attributed to clear stakeholders, and community representatives are becoming more involved in making nominations to the management committees for the conservation areas located adjacent to the park, such as community forests covered by the COVAREF initiative. These committees work to develop management plans for these zones, which can allow for some sport hunting for which the committee can levy a charge, and hold a potential for the committee to develop a community forestry component, and to control or protect other forms of subsistence hunting and gathering upon which many communities still rely. However currently the system is grossly inequitable, with a clear bias towards minority interests who are not the sole or primary forest stakeholders. For example, only 10% of the local delegates to the management committee of ZICGT 9, a communal forest that adjoins Moloundou Town and the Boumba River, are from the majority Baka community, who are most reliant on the forest to secure their livelihoods.

Ndameau (2000), WWF (2002), Nelson (2002), Tchikangwa (2002), Some (2002), Sous-Prefet of Moloundou (2002).

**Box 7: Campo Ma'an National Park, Cameroon**

Campo Ma'an National Park is located in Ocean Department of Southwest Cameroon, bordering Equatorial Guinea to the South. Originally established in 1932, it was fully demarcated and gazetted in the 1990s through GEF-financed technical support which helped MINEF elaborate the draft management plan for the zone. The draft plan for this park acknowledged the importance of communities in the realisation of the management plan, especially since many local and indigenous communities rely on forest resources which will be subject to increasing protection measures as full financing for the park is secured by WWF, who have been chosen to manage the park. Key stakeholders in the management plan that is still being negotiated include MINEF, WWF and the Bantu and Bagyeli communities who carry out hunting and gathering activities in the region of the park. Bagyeli communities in particular exhibit marked seasonal mobility across the region now covered by the park to pursue different livelihood activities, and up to now have been particularly marginalised in discussions about the management of the park. MINEF has now held several meetings with Bagyeli community members to discuss the draft management plan, and with other local communities hope that the final plan will adequately accommodate their subsistence requirements.

Nelson (2001/2), Owono, 2001/2.

**Legal reform**

**Challenge:** Most protected areas in Central Africa were created by colonial administrations, who were repressive, and during the intervening years there has not been much interest or incentive for them to develop working partnerships with local communities.

**Options:** Highlight benefits flowing to conservation projects from partnerships with local communities. Promote innovative, local level, formal (government-sanctioned) agreements between conservation agencies and local communities, to serve as guideposts for legislative reforms.

**Box 8: Key Benefits to Community Collaboration in Central Africa**

- **Commitment:** local and indigenous communities in rural areas rely on their environment to secure their livelihoods, and they are primary stakeholders in environmental conservation;
- **Efficiency:** local and indigenous communities often have the best knowledge about the environment in their areas, so can enable the development of more efficient and socially acceptable methods of protecting key species and habitats;
- **Sustainability:** local and indigenous communities are mostly stable within their region, so conservation measures that they implement are durable, and;
- **Local Benefits:** local and indigenous communities can benefit from support provided by outside conservation agencies in exchange for their efforts to conserve their environment.

**Challenge:** In Central Africa most forestry and conservation legislation is still founded on exclusionary principles, and is ill-adapted to participatory approaches which may permit communities access to conservation areas.

**Options:** Highlight how communities' legal rights of use in protected areas have been eliminated, and the impacts of this on the long-term sustainability of community livelihoods and the viability of conservation projects. Identify concrete cases where conservation goals in areas managed under IUCN classes I-IV are being achieved while local communities use rights are preserved or enhanced.

**Box 9: Opening Parks to People. Uganda, DRC, CAR and Cameroon**

Across Central Africa there are examples where conservation NGOs and governments have agreed to allow local people limited and regulated access to protected areas to satisfy at least part of their subsistence requirements. This development is extremely significant for the concept of Community Conserved Areas in Central Africa because it provides an avenue to increasing formal roles for local people in the management of parks, where few communities currently play a role, and provides a forum for dialogue between park managers and local communities, upon whose shoulders the long-term sustainability of protected areas rely. The Lobeke experience (see above) is complemented by other access provisions to parks and protected areas which have been implemented across Central Africa, including: allowing special access to grazing lands and fishing areas (Waza Logone, Cameroon), providing formalised access to forest resources within the park to clearly specified user groups and agreed product lists (eg, Bwindi, Uganda), instituting "Special Forest Reserves" where local people can hunt or fish (Dzangha-Sangha, CAR), or permitting indigenous people to remain within the Reserve itself (Mbuti in the Okapi Reserve, DRC). The next step is for local and indigenous communities to secure the right to become actively involved in the management of those areas that are key to their long-term survival. This change would open up a space for more equitable dialogue between conservation agencies and local and indigenous communities. Devolution of power by the government to local levels will be an essential component of change if parks are to be permitted to make long-term local agreements with community stakeholders; current attitudes and national laws prevent this from happening.

Kenrick (2000), Davey et al (2001), Larsen (2000), Ntiemoa-Baidu (2000); Shalakumo (2002).

**Challenge:** With the exception of Uganda, where individuals can secure individual title to land which they have held durably under customary rules, in most of Central Africa it is extremely difficult to secure formal legal validation for customary land tenure systems.

**Options:** Promote new laws that recognise and validate communal land tenure for communities in Central Africa and link this development to agreements between communities and government authorities over community involvement in conservation programmes.

## Participatory Forest Management and Integrated Conservation and Development

Challenge: For lands outside IUCN classes I-IV, uptake of new forms of legal landholding by communities has been slow, and they often do not address underlying

### Box 10: Community Forestry in Cameroon

In 1994 a new forest law for Cameroon was enacted and one of its key provisions opened up the way for communities to secure rights to the forest in their area by registering the area as a “Community Forest.” Community Forests are areas of up to 5,000 ha which may be attributed to communities under short-term (25 year) leases to enable communities to use the forest to sustain their livelihoods, especially through forestry exploitation. Part of the procedure by which Community Forests are established involves the identification of a Community Forest Management Agreement which is “a contract by means of which the administrative body in charge of forests entrust a part of the national forest to a community to be managed, conserved and used in the interests of the community” (Decree 95/531, translated by Auzel et al). Through this now well-known legal provision communities have been able to secure legal albeit temporary rights over forestland in their area, and use it to generate income, especially through locally controlled and managed timber exploitation. In addition, communities can continue to use the forest to secure hunting and gathering requirements, or may license professional hunting to outsiders, and the lands are protected under law from unauthorised exploitation by outsiders. Although the registration process to secure Community Forestry status has proved cumbersome and expensive for many communities, improvements to implementation have been made and the demand by communities to secure Community Forests for themselves is intense. In the face of outside logging pressures, communities that have obtained Community Forest Certification have begun to assert themselves and lodge complaints to the authorities about illegal logging on their lands. This is helping communities to gain confidence about their role as authoritative managers of the forests in their areas. Key drawbacks to the Community Forest path for communities is the complexity involved in securing registration, the short duration of the “lease” on the forest lands, the limited (5,000 ha) size of the forest which can be registered, and the fact that the rights allocated by government to communities are merely usufruct rights, rather than permanent and secure proprietary rights. In many cases, communities are obliged to register Community Forests over lands which have not been the main focus of their traditional customary tenure systems, while these remain vulnerable to outside exploitation.

Alden Wily (2001), Auzel et al (2001), Gardner et al (2001), Tichmayer (2002).

problems faced by them.

Options: Facilitate more widespread promotion of devolved community forest management regimes through, increased funding for development of the necessary conservation and community institutions, and the devolution of authority over management regimes to local levels so that communities can participate fully in the development and implementation of protected area management plans.

**Challenge:** New institutional forms guiding access for communities to protected areas are difficult to negotiate and costly in terms of conservation staff and financial resources, and the benefits to conservation projects are difficult to define precisely.

**Options:** Highlight strengths and weaknesses of current programmes to facilitate access to protected areas, and promote more widespread implementation where community livelihoods are put at risk by conservation projects

**Box 11: Multiple Use Programme of Mgahinga and Bwindi National Parks, Uganda**

The Multiple Use Programme around Mgahinga and Bwindi National Parks was established in 1993 in a response to a tightening of the rules protecting the park, and in anticipation of the strong negative response of local communities to being banned from using resources within the park. Working with the Ugandan Wildlife Authority (UWA) and government officials the NGO CARE implemented the project Development through Conservation, which was to oversee the development and implementation of programme to permit limited and controlled access to the parks. The basis for the programme is a series of agreements between government agencies including the UWA and communities about the scope, nature and regulations governing their access into the protected areas. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) specifying the products, activities and people to be involved play a central role in the management of local communities' exploitation of the forest resources. The process by which these rules have been agreed has promoted better dialogue and cooperation between communities and the parks, but increasingly communities have found the MOUs, which once fixed form the framework for forest access for a number of years to be too rigid. Many communities would like more flexible MOUs, or to renegotiate new MOUs, but this requires time, resources and political commitment which are not always available. Communities also feel somewhat marginalised from the decision-making about the programme, and generally indigenous Batwa have been marginalised from the Multiple Use Programme, even though they are key stakeholders of the area now covered by the park.

Davey et al (2001), Kenrick and UOBDU (2000); Nelson (2001/2) Mutebi (2002), UOBDU (2002).

## **Capacity-Building**

**Challenge:** There is a lack of capacity amongst communities to participate effectively in collaboration with conservation agencies and government, and there is a very low level of community participation in conservation agency-sponsored consultations about how conservation areas should be managed.

**Options:** Support capacity building amongst communities, including training, to help them develop better and more equitable links and improved cooperation with conservation agencies which are working in their region.

This is a cross-cutting issue which arises in virtually every case which has been outlined in the above cases. A key constraint to promoting increased collaboration between conservation organisations and communities is that local and indigenous communities do not yet have the confidence and skills to negotiate fairly with protected area staff, and many have not yet developed appropriate representative community institutions which are able to do so. Many local and indigenous communities hold negative views of conservation organisations, who they most associate with removing communities' access to and use of areas over which they have traditionally exercised their customary rights. Communities across the region are very suspicious of the overall objectives of conservation organisations, especially now that conservation agencies are trying to tap into development aid money, which in 1998, for example, formed 24% of WWF International's total income, grown from just 1% in 1989 (Jeanrenaud, 2002).

It is clear that forest-based communities can gain confidence and other skills if they and their representatives are able to participate in discussions with park managers and field staff from a position of strength. In most cases cited in this paper at least some community members have become more experienced in attending meetings with government and conservation authorities and in expressing their views to a diverse audience. However many protected area staff in the region are ill-equipped to understand how to treat communities as partners, rather than as subordinates. Although field staff are able to adapt their style and language to suit the changing jargon coming out of conservation and development discourse and donor funding requirements, many have not been exposed to guidelines on participation, and have not learned how to work in a participatory mode. Many confuse information provision with participation, so that communities become audiences rather than partners in dialogue and negotiation.

**Challenge:** There is a lack of knowledge amongst protected areas staff about the need for participation by and collaboration with local communities in conservation, and how to carry it out.

**Options:** Support increased training for government conservation staff and funding for recruiting new expertise and for new "high risk" initiatives to foster improved collaboration with communities to achieve their conservation goals. Establish clear job incentives for staff to encourage the development of new working practices. Establish guidelines that set clear standards for conservation agencies to follow.

## Summary of Conclusions

Most of the conclusions are already set out in the section on Challenges and Options (above), and illustrated by the case studies. These are synthesised below.

1. Information on Community Conserved Areas in Central Africa is sparse, and this is linked to the lack of control that communities in the region now exercise over the forests in their areas. There are very few documented experiences of CCAs in Central Africa.
2. While there is generally an African trend towards participatory forest management, and consequent shifts of power and devolution of authority for forests to lower levels, Central Africa has lagged behind. This is due to the highly centralised nature of most conservation legislation, the conservation approaches employed, the lack of accountability within the forestry sector, and the enormous benefits that can be captured by elites from timber and other natural resource exploitation.
3. Government land tenure legislation in Central Africa is often at odds with customary land tenure arrangements, which operate almost everywhere in rural areas; hence official laws governing forests and conservation can be used to extinguish customary land tenure arrangements, leading to a loss of community rights. This mitigates against the establishment of Community Conserved Areas.
4. Community participation and the devolution of authority are key ingredients if communities are to become more involved in conservation on their lands, but neither is being carried out adequately in most conservation projects in Central Africa.
5. There is evidence that conservation projects and integrated development and conservation schemes have the potential to raise the status of communities as central stakeholders in protected areas through increased participation, training and responsibility, but in practice, communities in Central Africa rarely secure any authority over management plans for conservation zones in their areas.
6. Where communities do gain significant government-sanctioned authority over the management of conservation, as in the case of Community Forestry programmes, communities' rights to the particular parcels of forest that are allocated are only usufruct, limited in time by the term assigned by government, and may not correspond to communities own customary lands.
7. Capacity building for both communities and conservation organisations is essential for: (a) communities to gain the necessary skills and understanding of issues to enter into equitable dialogues with protected area staff, and; (b) protected area staff to develop a proper understanding of the practice and benefits of community conservation.
8. Protected area managers will need to develop proper incentives for their staff to engage in ongoing dialogue with representative cross-sections of

communities in their areas, and need to gain a better practical understanding of the modalities of entering into equal dialogue with communities if the number of CCAs are to grow. Adequate funding by conservation agencies will be required to ensure this happens.



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