

»» Project Information

Implemented by:



Nature protection – Cameroon

National park: protecting rare species

Forest elephants, lowland gorillas, chimpanzees and other threatened species of animal find refuge in the Sangha protected area which straddles the borders of three countries. However, population pressure, illegal deforestation, poaching and conflicts are threatening the pristine condition of the Congo basin region. KfW Development Bank is providing support for improving protection at the borders of Cameroon, the Central African Republic and the Republic of Congo. The local populations are also beneficiaries of this support.

Context

The central African Congo basin harbours a natural paradise stretching across 28,000 square kilometres. Three national parks meet together in this area: Lobeke in Cameroon, Dzanga-Ndoki in the Central African Republic and Nouabale-Ndoki in the Republic Congo. Various rivers feed an unbelievably rich ecological forest area, which hosts many animal species and types of plants, not found anywhere else in the world.

For a long time, it seemed as if this paradise would cease to exist. The industrial exploitation of the forests in south-eastern Cameroon began at the start of the 1970s. Corrupt officials left powerful timber barons to their own devices, and did nothing to stem increasing poaching activities which occurred at the same time. Sawmills were built, as were workers' settlements right in the middle of the forests, further restricting the living space of wild animals. It was only a new forestry law that forced Cameroonian industry to rethink its position in 1994 – it linked the principles of sustainable forest usage with the goals of poverty mitigation. In this way, companies intent on acquiring a timber concession

were obliged to organise roads, schools and health care centres themselves. Yet this alone was not sufficient to stem the danger to natural resources. Astronomical prices for ivory, primarily from the black market in Asia, again fuelled poaching activities, while conflicts in the region were an additional detrimental factor.

Project approach

Cameroon's government, with support from Germany, has drawn up a national utilisation and protection strategy for the park's ecosystem. The local authority is involved, as well as the private sector, particularly timber and safari companies. The 7,000 square kilometre peripheral area of the Lobeke National Park plays an

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Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Country/Region	Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Central African Republic
Lead executing agency	TNS Trust Fund





The local population is benefiting from nature protection. A committee represents residents' interests. Source: WWF, photographer: Matthias Dehling

important role in the park's management plan, because the area contains villages and the residents need ecologically-friendly work. Consequently, fishing or gathering wood products (except timber), are allowed in some areas of the park. The local population also benefit from income from forest taxes and hunting fees. Their interests are represented by a local committee which meets regularly with the director of the protected area.

Furthermore, Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Republic Congo have agreed to jointly protect the cross-border Sangha protected area (in short TNS) where the three countries meet. However, the ensuing costs can only be met to a limited extent by income from tourism. It is expected that the volume of visitors will remain modest in the future, as the region is far from the beaten track.

German development cooperation is thus putting financing for the national parks on solid footing. This is carried out by investing in the TNS Trust Fund, a regional environmental foundation. It supports operations in all three national parks of the Congo basin. The main objectives are protecting the natural space and developing the peripheral areas sustainably. Intensive discussions between the governments of Cameroon, the Central African Republic and the Republic Congo are encouraged and promoted. The legal form of the foundation is a non-profit organisation with headquarters in Great Britain. KfW Development Bank has a representative on the foundation's board.

Impact

When elephants stomp along the River Sangha today, they often have a gamekeeper with binoculars in pursuit. The improved monitoring has, at times, led to a reduction in the number of poachers. The patrolling work of the gamekeepers is financed by interest income from the TNS Trust Funds. The parks also build accommodation, purchase equipment and pay for repairs with the proceeds. However, the aim of the fund is not simply to function as a financing tool. The impetus it provides for dialogue with the national authorities and local population is equally as important.

On this level, the foundations are being laid for effective nature protection, for example the countries agreed that the armed gamekeepers can move freely beyond the borders in the protected areas on joint patrols. An agreement has already been negotiated granting park employees the right to cross freely into the other countries. A similar agreement is set to widen the radius of movement of tourists, thereby enhancing the region's attractiveness.



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