

Biodiversity management and conservation in a forest concession adjacent to a totally protected area (Nouabale-Ndoki National Park), Northern Congo

Final Report

PD 4/00 Rev. 1 (F)

I. Introduction

The project was approved by the Council at its Twenty-eighth Session in June 2000 in Lima, Peru, and full financing was pledged at the same Session by the Governments of Switzerland, Japan, France and USA. The Agreement regulating the implementation of the project was signed on 2 April 2001 and the first disbursement of funds was made on 19 June 2001. A 6-month extension was granted until November 2004 by the ITTO Secretariat, based on an official request including proper justification, a detailed workplan and a budget.

II. Project Objective

The objective of the project was to design, implement and monitor timber company and local community based ecosystem management systems in the contiguous Kabo, Pokola and Loundougou forest management units adjacent to the Nouabale-Ndoki National Park.

III. Project Strategy and Activities

The project used an ecosystem approach for the management of the contiguous Kabo-Pokola-Loundougou forest concessions adjacent to the Nouabale-Ndoki National Park northern Congo. The approach was innovative and required the collaboration of the major stakeholders in the co-management of the forest ecosystems. It required the need for improved rational management of forest resources and the conservation of biodiversity to ensure long term ecosystem integrity and processes in the context of sustainable economic development. Therefore, the Ministry of Forest Economy (Government of Congo), the Congolaise Industrielle des Bois - CIB - (private company) and the Wildlife Conservation Society - WCS – (international environmental NGO) agreed to work together with local

communities to implement an integrated project with the goal of sustainable wildlife and forest management as part of the ecosystem management strategy. Thus, the project developed practical tools to assist the Republic of Congo in meeting the ITTO sustainable forest management objective while promoting biodiversity conservation within the context of a multiple-use forest production adjacent to a protected area.

IV. Project Achievements and Outputs

The project had five outputs, which contributed to achieve the specific objective. All five outputs have been achieved and are summarized as follows:

- The report on the zoning system, following the wildlife management guidelines, has been developed and should be included in the Management Plan of CIB company's forest management units (FMUs);
- The awareness raising campaign with the local population about the principles of sustainable wildlife management and protection has contributed to minimize the commercial and illegal hunting, in combination with a strong law enforcement programme that ensured adherence to hunting regulations and Congolese wildlife laws by local people and company employees;
- As part of the environmental education program, the CIB local television station was used to increase the understanding of most members of the indigenous communities on the potentially negative consequences of unsustainable resource use;
- Hunter organizations have been established and have facilitated the raising of awareness of hunting laws among hunters and the exchange of information concerning illegal hunting between the project and the hunters;
- Selected leaders have been trained as trainers for local communities near Kabo and Pokola FMUs and for schools of Kabo and Ndoki 2;
- The support and promotion of alternative protein sources for the local population were provided in all project areas except near Loundogou FMU. Three technicians had been trained for the promotion of alternative sources of protein;
- Demographic census and socio-economic surveys have been undertaken in villages near CIB's FMUs in order to follow-up the hunting pressure in FMUs, as the rapid population increase in Pokola is a source of concern;
- Ecological and socio-economic follow-up methodologies have been drafted and tested in order to develop a tool for the evaluation of the impact of forest management actions in the conservation of wildlife in FMUs. This tool could be used for a cyber tracking follow-up system;
- A database on wildlife inventories and surveys of hunting activities had been created in order to facilitate the development of strategies that could provide orientations to the future planning of the use of traditional lands and to determine the wildlife situation in the whole CIB forest concession;
- The norms of reduced impact logging techniques based on a GIS system have been tested and established for all CIB concessions and are at the early implementation phase; and
- A formal management system has been established to facilitate communications among the Government of Congo, WCS and CIB, in order to ensure that management strategies are officially incorporated into the CIB internal regulations and management plans that could serve to set national

standards for forest management and wildlife conservation in forest concessions in the Republic of Congo.

V. Target Beneficiaries Involvement

Beneficiaries of this project include the Government of Congo, as the Ministry of Forest Economy is currently using the experiences and results of the project to develop and adjust policy to promote similar management in forest concession in Congo. Ministry officials, who were involved in the project implementation, benefited from training and experiences.

The CIB logging company benefited in the implementation of this project and revised its regulations and management plans, in order to reduce forest encroachment and control human immigration and deforestation. The serious threat related to the illegal hunting and commercialization of protected species has been minimized in the Nouabale-Ndoki National Park thanks to the project implementation. Thus, the CIB has improved chances for certification of its products as a result of improved forestry and biodiversity management in its forest concessions.

The local communities and the indigenous peoples were involved in the establishment and implementation of a wildlife management strategy through the demarcation of hunting zones based on the traditional community land tenure systems, and all eco-guards incorporated into the enforcement efforts were recruited from local communities and indigenous peoples. Alternative activities for the production of proteins to replace bushmeat have also benefited local communities and indigenous peoples.

VI. Lessons Learnt

4.1 Development Lessons

Aspects of the project design that contributed to its success include the following:

- Strong integration of the government officials in the project validated the importance of the project, offered support at local and national levels, and assured that the project goals matched government goals;
- Early definition and clarification of the division of responsibility among all stakeholders prevented confusion and overlap between project partners, through shared responsibility among stakeholders, thus contributing to address the most complicated and socially contentious issues (such as controlling the commercial bushmeat trade);
- Integration of the private sector offered expertise and resources essential to the project success;
- The involvement of local communities into the establishment of hunting zones and the recruitment of eco-guards and project employees from local communities have contributed to the success of the law enforcement and wildlife conservation component of this project. The project has contributed to encourage local populations being organized in associations/committees that contributed to reinforce project actions in the field;
- The multi-faceted approach adopted for this project, which simultaneously developed education, wildlife conservation, research and monitoring, reduced

- impact logging techniques and alternative activities was essential to gaining and maintaining local support during project implementation; and
- The traditional land tenure systems have been reinforced through the wildlife management zoning based on traditional territories in consultation with local communities and indigenous peoples.

Aspects of the project design that challenged or slowed project implementation include the following:

- The lack of a formal structure for conflict resolution gave way to situations in which the stakeholders could not reach an agreement;
- The lack of a formal organ for communication between community leaders and other parties at the beginning of the project implementation;
- The lack of a regional development plan (national road placement, town development, etc.);
- The lack of a defined buffer zone in areas immediately surrounding the Noubale-Ndoki National Park.

Additional arrangements that could improve cooperation between the relevant parties interested in the project implementation include the following:

- Strengthening of community hunting and conservation committees could decrease village anxiety regarding changing wildlife policies and improve cooperation among local communities;
- Establishing a multi-agency task force (involving the project partners as well as other governmental departments concerned), which could contribute to deal with conflict management regarding development of infrastructure and reconciliation of biodiversity conservation with forest production objectives.

4.2 Operational lessons

The project inner organization and periodic monitoring of progress through regular review meetings and annual Steering Committee meetings contributed to project success by allowing for the timely resolution of administrative and technical issues arising during project implementation. The definition of the project management Chart and the roles and responsibilities of project partners, and the quality of project planning have contributed to the smooth implementation of the project.

Some of the most important external factors that influenced the project success were the following:

- Close management of the protection teams to prevent/reduce employee corruption, through regular evaluations, punctual and clear disciplinary measures, and increased intensity of the training programme;
- The careful planning of eco-guards' field programmes as pivotal factor in the successful management of these units with a maximum efficiency;
- Strong disciplinary measures taken by CIB logging company to limit the complicity of CIB truck drivers with hunters for the transport of commercial bushmeat on their vehicles. However, it is important to note that the importation of protein sources is more expensive than bushmeat and could

- require either an increase in employee salaries or the creation of a company-subsidized programme;
- A strong field team and the willingness to try multiple activities for the development of alternative activities programme taking into account the diversity of regions and cultures in the project landscape with different dietary preferences; and
- A strong education programme aimed at mitigating potential conflicts with local populations, especially for the enforcement of wildlife laws.

VII. Dissemination of Results

The results of the project were disseminated through the following mechanisms:

- Information and awareness campaigns conducted through schools, farmers and village associations/committees, and traditional chiefs;
- The utilization of the CIB local television station in local language and in French; and
- Regular consultations among project partners.

The Completion Report, the End-of-project Evaluation Report and the Technical Reports are available from the ITTO Secretariat upon request.

VIII. Recommendations Related to Future Work

Overall, the project has significantly contributed to increase the knowledge on biodiversity conservation in multiple-use production forests adjacent to protected areas. In addition, it has created an awareness of the potential benefits of biodiversity conservation, within a sustainable forest management process, among the local communities and indigenous peoples.

In order to consolidate the achievements of this project, and to further replicate these in other forest concessions in Congo, there must be a strong political will for the enforcement of laws regarding the biodiversity conservation with the collaboration of all stakeholders, particularly with local communities. Furthermore, the project's inner organization needs to be clear at two levels (within the project and among project partners), as effective biodiversity conservation and management in forest concessions requires great investment in a comprehensive approach that includes the following: wildlife protection, alternative activities, education and awareness, reduced impact logging techniques, and research/monitoring components.

Finally, it was noted that the biodiversity conservation in logging concessions may come to high social cost, especially in areas where the commercial bushmeat generates much of the revenue for local communities. Therefore, the government support is essential to enforce the existing wildlife laws while assuring access to alternative sources of proteins. Most of these recommendations are scheduled to be addressed during the second phase through the implementation of the project PD 310/04 Rev.2 (F) "Biodiversity Management and Conservation in Forest Concessions Adjacent to Totally Protected Area (Nouabale-Ndoki National Park), Northern

Republic of Congo (Phase II), which had got a full financial pledging at the Thirty-eighth Session of the Council in June 2005.

IX. Concluding Remarks

As the ITTO Secretariat has received the Project Completion Report, the End-of-project Evaluation Report, a series of Technical Reports, and the Final Financial Audit Report, the project PD 4/00 Rev.1 (F) was reported as completed.