

Summary of the Report of the Steering Committee of Mengamé Project, held in Mvangane on 9 December 2003

by
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Project title	PD 66/01 Rev. 1 (F) Establishment of the Mengamé Transboundary Gorilla Sanctuary (MMGS) at the Cameroon-Gabon Border
Country	Cameroon
Implementing agency	Directorate of Fauna and Protected Areas
ITTO contribution to budget	US\$ 770,750.-
Contribution of the Government of Cameroon	US\$
Donors countries	Japan, Switzerland, USA
Duration	2 years
Starting date	June 2002

The above project aims at supporting cooperation efforts between Cameroon and Gabon for transboundary conservation of the Mengamé (Cameroon) – Minkebé (Gabon) protected forests which harbor vital populations of the lowland gorilla. The Mengamé Protected Forest Area is located in Southern Cameroon along the border with Gabon. It comprises 65,000 hectares of prime habitat for the western lowland gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*). However, in view of the increasing threat to this the Cameroon government intends to extend this area to some 122,000 hectares. Gabon has also submitted to ITTO a similar project concerning a bigger area (about 900,000 ha, in the Minkebé Forest), but the approval process is still under way.

A meeting of the Steering Committee of Mengamé project took place on 9 December 2003 in Mvangane. It was chaired by His Excellency M. C.O. Tanyi-Mbianyor, Minister of Forestry and Environment. Participants included the Prefect of the Dja-Lobo Department, and several officials of the Ministry of Forestry and Environment (MINEF), various other national and local administrations, NGOs, and ITTO and donor representatives. On 10 December, ITTO and donor representatives, accompanied by MINEF officials and the Project Manager, visited the project area and had discussion with local authorities and community representatives.

The agenda of the meeting included, among other things, the review of the progress of the project, the analysis of the financial report and the Annual Work plan and budget for 2004, and the presentation of the Jane Goodall Institute's Annual Report for 2003.

The participants noted with concern the weak progress in the implementation of the project. From the report, it was clear that the project has not yet implemented any activity relating to transboundary cooperation between Cameroon and Gabon. The Technical Advisor has not yet been recruited as recommended in a previous Steering Committee Meeting. The Sanctuary itself has not yet been demarcated and gazetted as planned. Although tensions between the project and the local populations have been eased, there is a very slow progress in launching community development program. In contrast, the Jane Godall Institute completed important biological studies and inventories in the Sanctuary area. But the participants noted that due to lack of collaboration between the Institute and the Management of the Project, these studies were not being considered in the project's own activity plan.

Among the recommendations made and decisions taken by the PSC are the following:

- The selection of the Technical Advisor is a matter of urgency;

- The implementation of the project must be accelerated in order to reach its objectives in the planned duration;
- There should be a special evaluation of the project before its completion;
- The project must improve its relations with other partners involve in Sanctuary conservation work, and duplication of work should be avoid in order to reduce the costs;
- The project management must improve the quality of its reporting in the future;
- The Annual Work Plan for 2004 must be revised in order to be realistic and take into account the work done by the Jane Goodall Institute, and to show the various sources financial contributions to its implementation;
- The project manager must circulate to all the members of the Committee, for their information, the Agreement between MINEF and the Jane Goodall Institute.

The next Steering Committee meeting will take place in Oveng around mid-2004.