

Summary of the Report of the Steering Committee Meeting of the Mengamé Gorilla Sanctuary Project, Cameroon, held in Yaoundé on 13 January 2005

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Project title	PD 66/01 Rev. 1 (F) Establishment of the Mengamé Transboundary Gorilla Sanctuary (MMSG) at the Cameroon-Gabon Border
Country	Cameroon
Executing Agency	Directorate of Fauna and Protected Areas
ITTO Budget	USD 770,750.-
Donor 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 lowland Gorilla. Among its activities, it has important components aimed at promoting socio-economic development of local communities who depend on the Mengamé forest area for their livelihoods.

The Mengamé protected forest area is located in Southern Cameroon along the border with Gabon. It comprises 65,000 ha of prime habitat for the Western lowland Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*). However in view of the increasing threat to this species, the Government of Cameroon had intended to extend this area to some 120,000 ha. 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.

The implementation of the project has been slow, with a low capacity of utilization of ITTO funds. In view of this weakness, the Secretariat of ITTO and the Executing Agency carried out a mid-term evaluation in July 2004. After reading the mid-term evaluation report, the Delegation of Switzerland to the December 2004 Session of ITTC to the Committee on Reforestation and Forest Management, about the slow progress of this project and the ability of the Executing Agency to implement it in an effective and efficient manner. The Committee concluded on the need to organize a Special Project Steering Committee Meeting as soon as possible in order to assess the progress made to implement the recommendations provided by the mid-term evaluation as a prerequisite to the extension of the project.

Further to this conclusion, the Project's Steering Committee met in Yaoundé on 13 January 2005. It was chaired by Dr. Ali Madi, Secretary General, Ministry of Forests and Fauna, on behalf of the Minister. Participants included M. Emmanuel Ze Meka, Assistant Director of ITTO, the Governor of the Southern Province, the Prefect of Dja-Lobo Department, Members of Parliament from the Project area, several officials of the Ministry of Forests and Fauna and delegates of other Ministries, various national and local administrations. The Agenda of the meeting included, among other things, the review of the Government's implementation of recommendations provided by the Mid-term evaluation, the review of the progress of the project, and the analysis of the financial report and Annual Work Plan 2005.

The participants noted with satisfaction the progress made by the Government in implementing of the recommendations of the Mid-term Evaluation of the project. Based on this appreciation, the Steering Committee recommended an extension of the Project's duration, of an additional 18 months (January 2005 – June 2006). The following other recommendations were also addressed to the Executing Agency:

- Submit to ITTO, as soon as possible, the Annual Work Plan of Operations 2005.
- Plan the implementation of the remaining activities on a period of 18 months and revise the budget accordingly.
- Organize consultations with all the parties and stakeholders concerned in order to demarcate a non-fragmented Mengamé Gorilla Sanctuary;
- Facilitate the elaboration of a platform to establish coherence of the interventions of different stakeholders in the area.
- Pursue the efforts in the improvement of the project organization and management (fund disbursement modalities, day to day administration and management).
- Improve the functioning of the Consultative Committee.
- Proceed urgently to developing the capacity of local populations to elaborate and implement their micro-projects.
- Facilitate the collaboration of all Government agencies and NGOs which intervene in the respective region in order to higher synergies.
- Review the Government financial contribution taking into account the available resources and the priority activities.
- Assess the partnership with the Jane Goodall Institute.