

# Engaging Communities in Cross River Gorilla Conservation in Nigeria

Inaoyom Imong (WCS Nigeria)





# INTRODUCTION

## Distribution

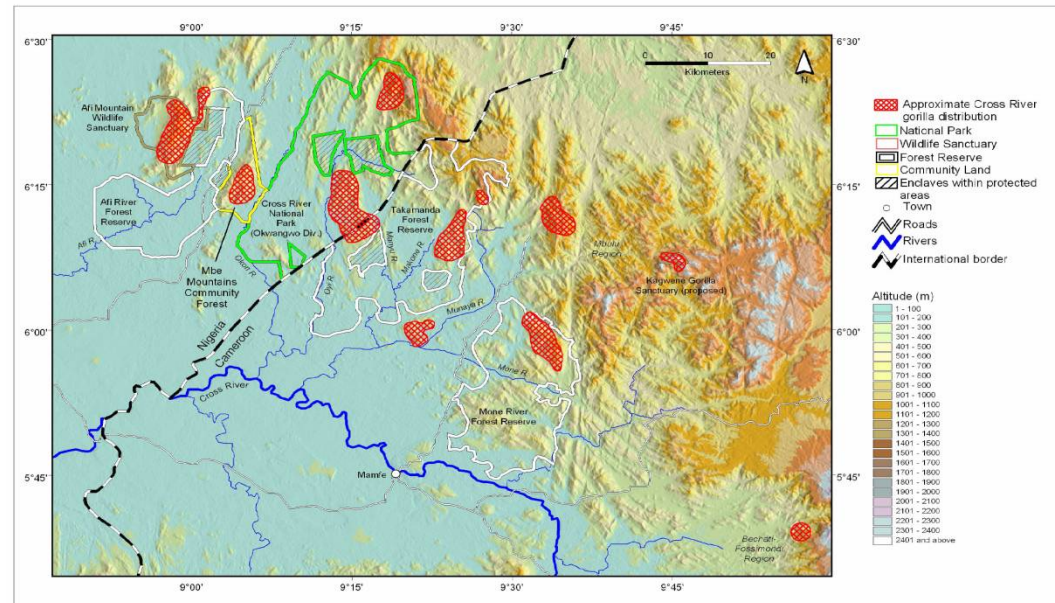
- 11 localities across range in Nigeria and Cameroon

### In Nigeria:

- Cross River National Park
- Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary
- Mbe Mountains Community Wildlife Sanctuary

Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzee also occurs at all gorilla sites in Nigeria

Range coincides with high human population



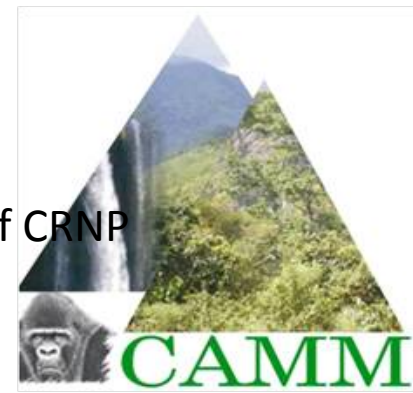
## **Earlier efforts to link great apes conservation and pover**

A WWF-UK supported Cross River National Park support zone communities development programme

The Mbe Mountains proposed as part of Cross River National Park

## **The Mbe Mountains**

- Surrounded by nine communities
- Remained without formal protection till 2005
- Attempts in the early 1990s to annex Mbe Mountains as part of CRNP rejected by communities



## **Conservation Association of the Mbe Mountains (CAMM)**

### *Goals*

To protect the Mbe Mountains (with a focus on gorillas)

To bring sustainable development to Mbe communities and improve livelihoods through conservation of the Mbe Mountains

### **CAMM strategy to achieve goals**

To integrate conservation and development through

- Establishment of effective decision-making (governance) processes and suitable resource use controls
- Creation of micro-enterprise (alternative livelihoods)
- Development of local capacity to produce sustainably, process and market more consistently and competitively



# Supporting CAMM to protect great ape habitat

Support for drafting of a constitution for (CAMM)

Assist demarcation of a core conservation area in the Mbe Mountains.

Assist drafting of a management plan for the Mbe Mountains





# HABITAT PROTECTION, RESOURCE USE RIGHTS, PERCEPTIONS OF THE POOR BY PROJECT STAFF

## Habitat and wildlife protection

- A team of twelve local eco-guards patrol and protect the mountains

## Resource use

- By-laws governing resource use enacted by communities themselves
- CAMM/communities impose fines on offenders
- Relevant national and state laws apply



## **Targeting communities and groups in implementing field activities/distributing benefits**

Work closely with CAMM to identify priority communities, resource user groups and household

Benefit sharing mechanism agreed by CAMM

Training of farmers in sustainable agricultural practices to improve yield – “Farmer Field School” programme (focusing on cocoa farmers)

Training and support for beekeeping and snail farming (targeting active hunters)

Training and support for domestication of NTFPs (targeting NTFP gatherers)

Assisting farmers to add value to their farm produce and market more profitably (e.g. cassava processing machines provided; cocoa farmers cooperative supported)



## Challenges

- Sustaining current interest and support of communities for the conservation of the Mbe Mountains
- Achieving significant improvement in the livelihoods of communities through Conservation of the Mbe Mountains
- Correctly targeting groups that have the heaviest impact on the forest and/or those that bear the greatest impact of conservation in poverty alleviation efforts
- Making CAMM an effective, self-sustaining community conservation association

# Challenges

- Disagreements within CAMM and potential collapse of CAMM: threat to long term conservation of the Mbe Mountains
- Funding constraints (currently NGO funding support critical)
- Securing long term funding to sustain CAMM and efforts to conserve the Mbe Mountains: carbon credit (REDD+) a potential solution?
- Ensuring efficient and effective enforcement of community by-laws

# Lessons learned

- Raising high expectations of economic benefits from conservation in the short term can have negative impacts
- Community-based conservation initiatives such as CAMM have potential for achieving great apes conservation and poverty alleviation, but their sustainability may depend on ensuring that communities receive economic benefits
- The size of community conservation associations like CAMM has funding implications that could affect sustainability



Thank You