

# COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS

SOUTH WEST REGION, CAMEROON

## Background

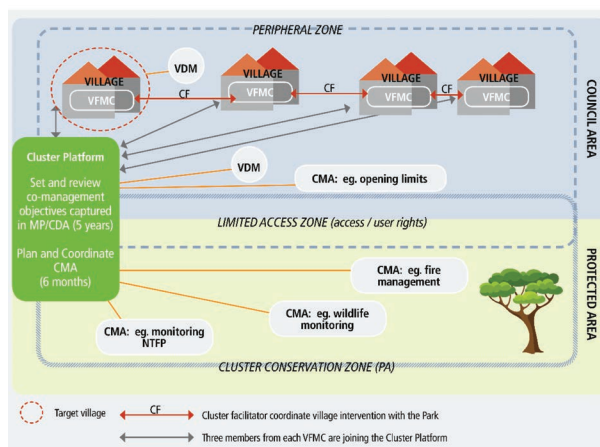
The South-West Region of Cameroon, as part of the Gulf of the Guinea Forests, is of utmost importance for biodiversity conservation not only in Cameroon, but also as one of the eight biodiversity hotspots in Africa. It is known for its exceptional diversity of habitats and the immense richness in both animal and plant species, many of them endemic. Ecosystems and species are exposed to threats due to poaching, habitat destruction and unsustainable utilisation of natural resources.

At the same time, the region presents favorable conditions for agricultural production due to the presence of fertile volcanic soils resulting in a relative high demographic density.

The Programme for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources Cameroon, South West Region (PSMNR-SWR) is intervening actually in four National parks (Mt Cameroon, Korup, Takamanda, Bakossi) and one Wildlife Sanctuary (Bayang-Mbo) which the Government of Cameroon has created for the protection of this extra-ordinary biodiversity.

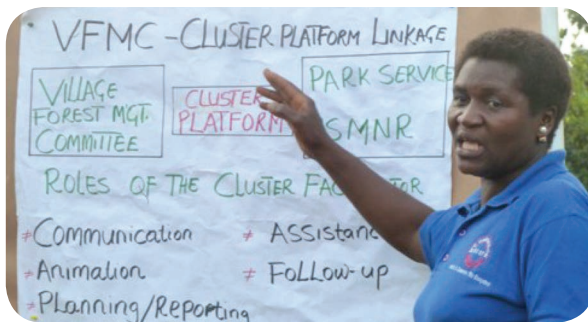
## Approach of PSMNR-SWR

A long lasting approach to biodiversity conservation in this context can only be achieved in partnership with the local communities living around these protected areas (PAs) and depending highly on natural resources. The collaborative management approach initiated by PSMNR-SWR intends to enhance community participation in the management of Protected Areas (PA) while improving their livelihood through remunerated collaborative management activities, NTFPs marketing, the sustainable intensification of agricultural practices and the provision of socio-economic infrastructure (water systems, farm-to market roads). It therefore links biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.



## Institutional set-up

- Basic institutions for the implementation of the approach are Village Forest Management Committee (VFMC), which are composed of elected members of the community representing the main user groups having an interest in PAs management (NTFP collectors, hunters, youths and women).
- To facilitate the collaborative management interventions, villages, which share boundaries with the PAs have been grouped into Clusters. Cluster Platforms have been constituted to enhance community participation and facilitate information exchange with the park services. They are constituted of representatives of the park services, chiefs and three selected VFMC members from each village of the cluster and a representative of the concerned council. They can be enlarged to other stakeholders.
- PAs have been divided into management units called Cluster Conservation Zones (CCZ), a zone of the park for which a particular cluster has specific management responsibilities.
- To animate the relationship between the park service and the communities of a cluster on a day to day basis, a Cluster Facilitator (CF), which is a member of one of the communities, has been selected and is remunerated by the PA for his/her services.



**Sensitization...**



**CCDA consultation and...**



**Trap removal as collaborative management activity.**

- Key element of the collaborative management approach is the Cluster Conservation and Development Agreement (CCDA). These agreements are negotiated and signed between PA services and the cluster platform members after a process of consultation and strategic planning to identify site-specific management issues (ex: poaching, human-wildlife conflicts, fire etc.) and the definition of local strategies to address them, with clear commitments from PA services and communities. The exercise serves also to negotiate user rights and access zones eg for sustainable harvesting of Non-timber forest products (NTFPs).
- The negotiation is not limited to the Protected Area but extends to its peripheral zone with the identification of prioritized village development measures (VDM). Representative of the councils are part of the negotiation.
- Based on these agreements and associated half-yearly action plans collaborative management activities (CMA) and Village Development measures (VDM) in the peripheral zones of the PAs are implemented. The CCDAs are the base for the PA management plan and are integrated also in council planning instruments (council development and land use plans).



**...negotiations.**

## Realizations

The approach has been introduced since 2011 on village level in more than 90 communities in Mt Cameroon, Korup and Takamanda National Parks. It has been reviewed in 2016 to the above described cluster level approach to increase efficiency and strengthen the effective involvement of all stakeholders and is actually put in implementation in five protected areas in SWR with 171 local communities concerned. Since phase IV, PSMNR is implementing an engagement strategy involving high impact villages and forest user groups, mainly hunters. More than 500 repented hunters have been engaged in alternative livelihood options (livestock, cocoa, vocational training).

## Lessons learnt

The collaborative management of PA is a long term process which requires the appropriation of biodiversity conservation issues by local stakeholders to be achieved through the progressive delegation of management responsibilities and the creation of related local benefits. However, without an effective monitoring and law enforcement system, which can monitor and enforce commonly agreed rules, brings defaulters a disadvantage and creates additional pressure on compliance, the collaborative management alone can't be successful in preserving the integrity of protected areas.

For more information

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