

INTERIM REPORT ON ALTERNATIVE MICRO-ENTERPRISES TO ILLEGAL HUNTING

1.0 INTRODUCTION

With committed financial assistance from the Rufford Small Grants Foundation in the UK, CAD, together with local communities has been addressing critical issues affecting both wildlife and people's livelihoods in the Muanenguba and Bakossi forest region of Cameroon. Besides raising awareness about the plight of endangered species concerned, CAD is tackling poverty (the main drive behind hunting) by introducing and promoting viable alternative micro-enterprises other than hunting and bushmeat trading. Beneficiaries are not only earning income, but also obtain nutrients from these activities. Besides contributing towards improved quality of life and living conditions of beneficiaries, these alternative livelihood options are helping to reduce the overall time spent on hunting, thus, curbing the current pressure on wildlife. With the help of basic materials and equipment, CAD is assisting hunters and other community members in a series of micro-enterprises including snail farming, beekeeping and livestock farming. In a bid to increase the scope of this project, we also initiated a tree planting programme with technical and material support from Trees for the Future in USA in 2007. This complimentary programme aims at ensuring forest habitat restoration, soil fertility improvement and increase agricultural production via agroforestry systems. This brief report highlights the achievements realised so far in the aforementioned areas:

2.0 ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

2.1 Beekeeping

Beekeeping forms an important aspect of our work due to its conservation and socio-economic potentials of this innovation. CAD is currently spreading beekeeping knowledge among hunters and bushmeat traders in the project area. We have organized 5 on-farm training sessions on hive installation, and management in Ngolleh, Muantah, Akid, Muandon and Bangem. 41 people including 18 men, 12 women and 11 youths have been trained and gained practical skills in beekeeping techniques. In addition, 22 beehives have distributed and installed with identified hunters in the above village communities. Some farmers are already producing honey for food and income.

2.2 Snail Farming

As a newly introduced innovation in the region, this activity is increasingly attracting local interest, particularly among women and children. Though snails serve as an important alternative to bushmeat, it is worth noting that this resource is itself subject to severe threats not only in our project area but in West Africa in general where it is heavily collected for food and income.

With the hired services of a snail specialist, we organised a Training of Trainers workshop on snail farming in Muambong in May 2008. Over 35 group representatives gained practical knowledge and skills in snail farming and are expected to train others in villages. Participants were trained in aspects such as importance of snails, housing, farming methods, installation, farm management, feeding and marketing. In addition participants were given brief lectures on HIV/AIDS and over 100 packets of condoms distributed among them. As a follow-up to this workshop, we achieved the following:

- 56 people (26 men, 19 women and 11 youths) have been trained through 4 on-farm training sessions;
- 6 group snail farms with over 8752 snails have been established with hunters and *Pepper Soup Sellers*;
- More than 500 local people in different communities have gained knowledge of snail farming;
- Over 50 forest users with interest in snail farming have been identified for eventual training and assistance;
- Beneficiaries have not only improved their nutrient intake by eating snails but equally sell them to earn income.

2.3 Pig Farming

Our approach here is that of *Passing-Over-the Gift*. In this case, when a beneficiary group produces piglets, one piglet is passed on to a newly identified group of hunters and bushmeat traders. We have so far trained 30 people (14 men, 9 women and 7 youths) in pig farm construction and management. In addition, 5 pig farms have been established with hunters in Ngolleh, Muandon, Muntah and Nteho. CAD has donated a piglet to each of these groups.

2.4 Forest and Soil Restoration via Agroforestry Systems

In collaboration with Trees for the Future(TTF) in USA, CAD is promoting tree planting within agroforestry systems in the Bangem region. The aim of this project is to ensure habitat/forest restoration, improvement in soil fertility and increase agricultural production by rural farmers. These agroforest if properly managed will in future provide homes for wild animal species that have lost their habitats. So far:

- We acquired and distributed 7330 seeds of *Calliandra spp*, *Acasia spp*, Mahogany and neem to Okasi, ASONEP and Nokwe agroforestry groups and beekeeping groups in Ngolleh and Ekanjoh Bajoh.
- Together with TTF USA, we trained 14 group representatives on the importance of agroforestry, nursery establishment and management, transplanting and on-farm management of trees in April 2008.
- We have assisted these aforementioned groups in the establishment of tree nurseries by supplying them with nursery tools and equipment such as spades, dig-axes and watering cans. The trees are pending out planting until maturity.

3.0 MAJOR DIFFICULTIES AND CONSTRAINTS

- We are faced with the problem of inadequate working materials and equipment to expand in these activities. As such we are unable to support all the several requests that we receive from new communities;
- Due to the difficult terrain in which we operate, the lone motorcycle we have regularly breaks down and this make extension very difficult.
- Some people who are involved in illegal hunting activities hide their identity as hunters and bushmeat dealers for the fear that they will be arrested. This therefore make the identification process very difficult;
- The volunteer serving at CAD do receive salaries and what they earn as allowances is unsatisfactory. While this could weaken staff commitment to work, it also puts Management in the fear that staff could leave CAD in search of other more paying jobs.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is the need to sustain efforts on community sensitisation, education on wildlife laws and suitable hunting practices in the project area;
- There is also the need to intensify and expand in the newly introduced alternative sources of income and nutrients so that people spend more time on them than going hunting. In addition, a study of a marketing strategy to add value to produce from these activities is necessary to increase local profit margins;
- CAD will also need further strengthening of local wildlife groups put in place by way of legalisation and capacity building in monitoring and control of illegal activities, especially now that part of the project area has been turned into a national park.
- There is the need to for an environmental education programme for school children who might grow up as hunters when they drop out of school for poverty reasons or weak academic performance. This will help to build an informed new generation that takes interest and leadership over wildlife protection at an early age;
- In order to understand the bushmeat market situation in the project area, there is need to conduct a bushmeat market survey to generate baseline information to inform conservation and decision-making’
- There is the need to improve CAD’s networking capacity through registration with national and international networks so as to ensure information and experience sharing with organisations having similar conservation objectives.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The plight of rural people, biodiversity and our fragile environment has remained our major pre-occupation during this period. This is noticeable in the form of a more aware population and gradual growth and expansion in a series of micro-projects that local people embark upon to generate family income and curb pressure on wildlife. This project has also generated some knock-on effects including habitat restoration and a primary school environmental education programme. The scope of all these activities will need to be enlarged to the advantage of marginalised communities and endangered species. We therefore extend our thanks and appreciation to all the local groups, individuals and other conservation organisations that have assisted us in one way or the other.



