

# **REPORT ON**

## **COMMUNITY SENSITIZATION AGAINST ILLEGAL HUNTING & BUSHMEAT TRADE IN THE MUANENGUBA & BAKOSSI FOREST REGIONS OF CAMEROON**

**ORGANIZED BY CAD FROM THE 23<sup>rd</sup> -31<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2008**

*Reported by:*  
*Martin N. ETONE*  
*Hilary E. NGIDE*

© February 2008

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.0 OBJECTIVES OF SENSITIZATION MEETINGS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3.0 MEETING PROCEE.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4.0 FORMATION OF FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEES.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5.0 ACHIEVEMENTS AND RESULTS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>6.0 DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>7.0 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>8.0 CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>5</b>

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We wish to express our profound gratitude to the Rufford Small Grants Foundation in the UK, for the financial support given us to foster community wildlife management efforts in the Muanenguba and Bakossi forest regions of Cameroon. It is our fervent wish that this collaboration grows from strength to strength in assisting local communities in this region address current conservation and livelihood issues affecting their own survival and that of endangered wildlife species in our project area.

In addition, our grateful thanks go to the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (Divisional Delegation for Kupe-Muanenguba), the local Administration, CAD staff, Traditional Chiefs and their respective communities for the varied support and active participation throughout the entire sensitization process.



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Hunting and trading in wildlife resources are among the priority activities from which local communities in the Muanenguba and Bakossi forest regions of Cameroon earn a living. These forest-dwelling populations hunt and sell *bushmeat* because of the desire to satisfy basic needs of food, income, medicine and several cultural imperatives. Though a few traditional norms favour wildlife management approaches, most hunting methods and practices carried out by local people here are non-selective, wasteful, unsustainable and fall short of fulfilling the legal requirements of national wildlife policies and regulations. A major drive behind such poor practices is poverty. This is coupled with inadequate local capacities in wildlife management, ignorance and poor knowledge about existing legal frameworks governing wildlife exploitation in Cameroon. Consequently, people's dependence on wildlife resources and the very existence of wild animal species in this region are being jeopardized as people become poorer and increasingly place immense pressure on wildlife resources.

With financial support from The Rufford Small Grants Foundation in the U.K, Community Action for Development (CAD) has been raising community awareness against unsustainable hunting practices and the rising local trade in *bushmeat* through a series of village-based sensitization meetings holding under the auspices of the local department of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF). Over 116 people including men, women and youths from 8 village communities in the project area have been identified and fully sensitized. This sensitization and awareness-raising process set the pace for local populations to make a clearer distinction between sustainable, legal and subsistence-level hunting that offers greater benefits and unsustainable, illegal and indiscriminate-level hunting that jeopardizes opportunities of younger and future generations and threatens several endangered species of wildlife. Throughout the exercise, emphasis was laid on government's policy on the protection of wildlife and its encouragement for local communities to take leadership in the rational use and management of their resources. In addition to preliminary explanation of some aspects of the wildlife law, participants also defined community-specific strategies for controlling and monitoring undesired hunting practices and set up follow-up committees to work towards the creation of wildlife management groups in the project area. (Separate minutes of meetings exist). These sensitisation meetings are part of CAD's ongoing campaigns for efficient and sustainable wildlife management around the Bakossi and Muanenguba forest regions of Cameroon.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE SENSITIZATION MEETINGS

The objectives of the sensitization exercise were:

- \* To identify those with interest in hunting and *bushmeat* trade;
- \* To sensitize local populations against unsustainable hunting methods and practices;
- \* To form community-based structures for monitoring and controlling local hunting activities.

## 3.0 MEETING PROCEEDINGS

Following introduction of participants and words of welcome from various host Chiefs, local people were briefed on the role of the CAD/RSG Participatory Wildlife Management project and orientated on its implementation strategy. The Project Coordinator, Mr. Martin N. Etone, emphasized that the project is intended to identify those with interest in hunting and sale of *bush meat*; facilitate community organization and improve local awareness and knowledge on existing wildlife regulations and proper wildlife management. In addition, the project Coordinator said this project addresses issues of poverty through the provision of viable alternative livelihood options other hunting as well as mobilize community efforts in campaigning against abusive exploitation of wild animal resources in the Muanenguba and Bakossi forest regions of Cameroon. It is worth noting that though primary focus is on highly endangered species such as gorillas, drills, chimpanzees and monkeys, keen attention was equally given to other species currently under severe threats and legal protection.

The sensitization process was also characterized by detail analysis of local hunting practices and a preliminary introduction of some aspects of Cameroon's wildlife law. In a participatory manner, local

people enumerated a series of hunting methods and practices, many of which are non-selective, wasteful and prohibited by law. These include: *Trapping, chemical poisoning of animals and streams, team and night hunting using headlamps, use of fire, hunting dogs and Dane guns.* Reasons advanced for the above activities range from the desire to protect crop farms from wild animal destruction to social, economic and cultural reasons such as income, food, medicine and use of skins as ornaments in homes and the production of local drums. However, the Coordinator of CAD cautioned hunters to relegate these activities around farms because they are largely unselective, indiscriminate in nature and punishable by law.

Furthermore, the representative of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (Kupe Muanenguba Division), Mr Ntongwe Julius Mbulle, emphasized on government's policy with respect to wildlife protection, which he said calls a participatory approach in rational use and management of forest resources without compromising the needs of present and future generations. In addition, he explained the legal implication of the 1994 law in hunting, particularly with respect to endangered and protected species such as chimpanzee (*Pan Troglodytes*), drill (*Mandrillus leocophaeus*) and gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*) etc. He further explained the legal classification of animals into **Class A** (that are totally protection), **class B** (protected but could be hunted only with permits or authentic authorization), **and Class C** (partially protected and allowed for acceptable traditional hunting) and the modalities for hunting animals in each class and penalties against defaulters.

With respect to local hunting methods and practices, the Divisional Chief of Section for Wildlife explained the disadvantages of each of these methods to man and animals as well as reasons why they are prohibited by law. Some of the disadvantages of unsustainable hunting practices included:

- \* Non-selectivity and Extinction of animal species;
- \* Exposure to legal action and punishment
- \* Exposure to accidents and eventual loss of lives due to risks associated with this activity
- \* Deprivation of young and future generations of knowledge of some animal species;
- \* Yields very little family income, cannot be inherited and has no pension;
- \* Interferes with seed dispersal;
- \* It is wasteful, exhaustive, tedious, risky and based on chance.

#### **4.0 FORMATION OF FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEES**

During the sensitization process, each of the communities formed a Follow-up Committee averagely comprising of five members. Four of such committees have been put in place as pace setters for the creation of village wildlife management groups to henceforth monitor hunting activities in village communities. Each of these committees had as an assignment to:

- \* Facilitate the holding of a constituent meeting involving Chiefs, traditional councilors, hunters and *bushmeat* sellers during which to elect an executive bureau;
- \* Assist in the drawing up of a draft constitution for the group;
- \* With assistance from CAD and MINFOF, follow-up the legal recognition of the group
- \* Forward draft Constitution and list of members to CAD and MINFOF

#### **5.0 ACHIEVEMENTS AND RESULTS**

- \* 5 community- based sensitization meetings involving 11 villages have been successfully organized in Ngomin, Muetan, Nzimbeng, Ngolleh and Kodmin villages;
- \* Raised awareness of over 116 local people including men, women and youths against illegal unsustainable hunting and sale of bushmeat, clarifying the disadvantages of each of the practices used for the well being of local people and wild animals species currently under serious threats.
- \* Local participation in the effective implementation of the project has been enlisted and encouraged
- \* A series of community-specific strategies to enhance monitoring and control of local hunting practices

have been elaborated;

- \* 5 follow-up committees (each with 5 members) have been set up as pace-setters for the eventual creation and functionalization of local wildlife management groups and associations that would take leadership in the control and monitoring of unsustainable hunting practices in the project area;
- \* Local populations have been kept aware of practicable alternative livelihood options that exist other than hunting, especially as the latter is not a live-long activity and without any pension.
- \* More hunting communities in the Muanenguba and Bakossi forest areas have been discovered to be sensitized in the days ahead following our schedule of activities

## **6.0 DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED**

- ✓ Most hunting communities such as Njimbeng are inaccessible, so people could only be reached by trekking.
- ✓ Many hunters viewed CAD staff as forest guards. It was therefore difficult to assemble them because they either hide their identity as hunters or deliberately boycotted the meetings.
- ✓ Inadequate training equipment to allow better display and spread of information while in villages
- ✓ A number of hunters were still hard to convince and vowed not to desist from illegal practices, especially as people consider this a very lucrative activity.

## **7.0 GENERAL STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MEETINGS**

During each of the meetings local people brainstormed on possible strategies that would improve local livelihoods as well as foster sustainable wildlife management in the area. These included the following:

- \* Introduction of Alternative Income Generating Activities such as livestock production, bee keeping, and micro-business enterprises to local populations;
- \* Introduction of wildlife domestication with focus on grass cutters and snails;
- \* Increasing local participation in wildlife management through the creation of community hunting zones;
- \* Intensify and sustain community sensitization and campaigns efforts against current unsustainable hunting practice and the sale of bush meat in all the villages in the project area;
- \* Need to put in place functional local wildlife management structures (groups/associations) to monitor and control local hunting activities in the project area;
- \* Need to keep local communities in the project area aware of the legal provisions of the 1994 wildlife law through regular explanations and simplification of policies and regulations governing the exploitation of wildlife resources in Cameroon.
- \* Provide conservation education in primary schools, colleges and whole communities in order to help people know the importance of their wildlife heritage to their very existence and the need to preserve it.
- \* The need to promote all traditional norms that favour wildlife use and management;
- \* Carry out identification of animals species killed and their current status;
- \* Embark on the rehabilitation of degraded forest landscapes/habitats through tree planting
- \* The local department of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife should enforce all the mechanisms put in place to regularly implement wildlife regulations, particularly as CAD is already spreading knowledge of the law among communities in Muanenguba and Bakossi forest regions of Cameroon.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

Raising awareness among forest-dwelling populations on the devastating effects of unsustainable and illegal hunting remains vital in achieving sustainable wildlife management. While these efforts must be consolidated in communities already reached, there is need to extend such efforts to many more village communities in the project area. In addition, the sensitization meetings helped to generate useful background information for the workshop that will soon hold on the 1994 wildlife law in particular and the entire project as a whole. Once again, we sincerely thank the Rufford Small Grants Foundation for the

financing CAD for this project and it is our hope that this collaboration is more intensified in future. In addition, our grateful thanks go to the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (Divisional Delegation for Kupe-Muanenguba), our staff and local communities for their various support and full participation throughout the sensitization process.