

Project Update: February 2009

Duration of Project: 3months (December 2008 – February 2009).

The month of February 2009 which is the third (last) month of the project was marked by the following events:

- Media Campaign (Radio talk shows and slots over the provincial station of Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation “CRTV”)
- Door-to-door sensitization and distribution of T-shirts carrying education messages
- Plenary meetings (sensitization) or interactive discussion with local population
- Installation of a large billboard at the major entrance of the Forest
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Report Writing

Weekly Media Campaign (Radio Talk Shows and Slots over the Regional Station of Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation - CRTV).

The radio talk shows and slots in English and the dialects of Bambui Village and Kedjom Ketinguh (Small Babanki) covered the entire month of February 2009. Owing to a benign gesture from some generous individuals the media campaign continues until mid march 2009.

A copy of some of the talk shows and audio slots will be sent by postal service to the Rufford Small Grants Foundation soon.

Open community meetings (sensitization) and interactive discussion with Kedjom-Ketinguh Population (Up Village/Country)

Chua Centre (Up village – Kedjom Ketinguh) 5th February 2009-02-09

Start time: 3pm Stoppage Time: 7pm

The open community sensitisation and interactive discussions for the Up village/country (Kedjom-Ketinguh) took place at the village square called Chua Centre. This location of meeting was chosen for its easy accessibility to the rest of the community, its popularity and its logistic facilities making it an added advantage. This open community sensitisation and interactive discussions pulled inhabitants from the following quarters:

Alumbeih, Mbuvishom, Chua Centre, Ngoh-Bih, Wiag, Shelo Tinshe, Chualiu, Tomobuh, Mbudoboh, Ketieh and Chuku.

The meeting was facilitated by the local community animator *Mrs. Esther Mayor Tinchu* and began with prayers led by a lady (Susana). This was followed by a welcome address from the Vice Chairman of the village traditional council *Mr. Esa Mohamed* and an introduction of the sensitization team to the population.

The population was educated on burning issues regarding the great apes of the Tubah Upland Forest, the importance of protecting their natural habitat, the threats they face from human activities such as hunting for bush meat, bush fires (with causes and mitigating measures), destruction of forest (mass deforestation for farming, settlement), inroads into the forests, expansion of grazing areas. The population was advised on the importance of forest to their livelihoods (source of water, fuel wood, medicinal plants, food source, wildlife habitat and a regulator of climate).

A local elite and retired worker of the tourism industry expressed huge gratitude of the sensitization and said he had been trying to educate his people on the protection of the forest and wildlife with little or no effect. To him this project is going to have a great impact and he prays for a continuous and long term education of the ignorant mass. The local population of up village (Kedjom-Ketinguh) was elated to learn that the Tubah Forest is of the rare places in the world that hosts great apes and expressed the willingness to help in saving their reduced numbers and finding ways of improving on the present population numbers. Five local volunteers for the community (up village/country) promised to mobilize behind Christian Tabifor and BAPESU to achieving all programs which is aimed at saving the great apes and the Tubah forest that the population indispensably hinge on for subsistence.

The campaign team emphasize the need for many alternative activities or sources of income to be practiced by the people (ecotourism, poultry farming, snail farming, beekeeping, cane rat rearing). In return the population expressed the great need for such activities but regret the lack of funds or capital, basic training in starting. They appealed on BAPESU and the project team to seek for funding in helping them setting up sustainable income activities. The women in particular begged on BAPESU to assist them in training in improved methods of farming different from the Ankara System (which is damaging). Additionally the people all agreed to mobilise behind their community promoters/volunteers and bring out proposal on the kind of activities they want to carryout and how they can be assisted. These volunteers or community promoters will be a major link with the project coordinator (BAPESU). Presentations during the open meeting were made by the following persons:

Mr. Tabah Peters (a consultant and Natural Resource Management Officer for Tubah Council)
Mr. David Achomonchi (a local volunteer chimpanzee monitor)
Mrs Florence Tumetoh (Forestry and Wildlife Expert)
Christian Tabifor (Project Coordinator)

The population had the unique opportunity to ask questions and get ready answers about practical issues concerning the chimpanzees of the Tubah Upland forest and the particular daily threats that they (Pan Troglodytes) faced.

During the interactive discussions the population raised the following pertinent questions

1. Why are Great Apes endangered and why must we protect them?
2. If you meet the chimpanzee in your farm will you take it to court?
3. Are there any protected forests in the North West Region of Cameroon?

4. Are we (the local population) protecting small patches of forest that remain or are we going to plan new forests for the wild species of animals
5. In our culture and tradition “No Ankara, no Pumpkin” which method are we going to do farming in order to meet up with our food demands?
6. Is this sensitisation program renewable or is it going to continue?
7. Will BAPESU come up with training programs for women in good and sustainable farming methods?

At this particular sensitization and open community meeting material was shared regarding great apes (great apes brochure), leaflets, slogans and T-shirts with alert educating messages (**Save Our Great Apes, Save Tubah Forest and Save Yourself**). The population agreed under the astute leadership of their community animator to come out massively to stage a matching* parade on the 11th of February (Cameroon’s National Youth Day Celebration). This is an endeavor in helping to educate the population on the importance of protecting the great apes of the Tubah Upland Forest. All in all, the open community sensitization and interactive discussion was of a great success and participants all headed home with new insights and first-hand information.

* Match Parades were staged in four separate venues in the two villages during the National Youth Day Celebration. Please a few pictures are attached.

Open community sensitization and interactive discussion with Bambui Village Population

On the 24th of February two separate open community sensitisation meetings were held in Bambui Village. The first open community sensitisation for this day was held in the compound of the head quarter of Baforkum in Bambui from 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM and the second from 2:00PM to 5:03PM (local time) was hosted by one of the village’s councillor at large hall (Baforkum Quarter). The target population for Bambui village are those quarters that are very close to the forest and include:

Baforkum, Filieh, Ntabang, and Matulah. The population was educated on the immediate threats that the great apes (Chimpanzees) of the Tubah Upland Forest encounter at present and on the very importance of the forest to their livelihoods (water supply, firewood, climate regulator enrichment of soil fertility, source for medicinal plants used in for healing locally, food source, supplier of oxygen, wildlife habitat for other rare species like squirrels, baboons, the Banama Turaco bird etc). The population promised to engage in the protection of the great apes that we refer to as our close relatives by halting hunting for bush-meat, prevention of bushfires, not building houses and farming in the forest, and a stop to deforestation and delving into alternative income generating activities like poultry farming, beekeeping, cane rat rearing, gardening, and pig rearing. But the people expressed the lack of funds to carry these alternative income generating activities. The youths in particular that generally practice hunting and farming appealed to Mr, Christian Tabifor to assist them in seeking funding in undergo capacity building (training) and start up capital. Women were encouraged to practice organic farming than practicing “Ankara System” and using fertilisers. One woman explained to me (Christian Tabifor) that they consider themselves as good disciples of the awareness program and will

robustly engage in a fight to save their forest and wildlife from destruction. For them the forest is life itself, and is essential for the transmission of their traditions and cultural identity. If the forest cannot be saved, they cannot survive as a people.

The population was also elated to receive campaign materials (T-shirts, Great Apes Brochure, Flyers and slogans). The people collected material and went round from one compound to another compound sensitising also their neighbours and distributing flyers, slogans, Great Apes Brochures and pasting of campaign posters everywhere in the quarters especially in public places.

NB: The people accepted the T-Shirts as a commitment to protect the Great Apes (chimpanzees) of Tubah Upland Forest. As an indication they will respect the Great Apes as important to the environment.

(Please see some few pictures attached)

Visit of the Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife Cameroon to the Communities around the Forest and to Tubah Upland Forest

On the 13th and 14th of February 2009 the Divisional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife Mezam, North West Region of Cameroon, *Mr. Mbah Guy Dekolla* and his team made up of the chief of wildlife section and protected areas Mr. Sama Emmanuel and the Chief of Post for Forestry and Wildlife Tubah visited the Tubah Upland forest at our invitation for an evaluation and monitoring of the situation. This arm of the ministry of Forestry and Wildlife for the North West Region were never aware of the existence of a large forest in Tubah. So this field visit was to give them a firsthand appreciation of the forest and also for monitoring and evaluation of the ongoing project of BAPESU. During the two days visit their team had interviews with the communities around the forest. The Project team lead them through the forest to get an appreciation of the threats faced by the great apes.

At the bottom-line their observation was that BAPESU is doing a great initiative and the divisional delegate feels that this work has to be supported for the protection of animals as chimpanzees, and many others. The delegate promised to report back to the government of Cameroon about the present situation. The Project worked in close gossamer thread of collaboration with the delegation of Forestry and Wildlife and throughout they have provided technical assistance, inputs and advice towards achieving the desired goals. It should be noted here that it is the very first time workers from this ministry have visited the Tubah Upland Forest and was a discovery to them.

Implantation or the installation of an Awareness Billboard

A billboard measuring 2meters by 2 meters of surface was installed on the 26th of February 2009 at one of the main entrances into the forest on the forest. The board carries on both sides a picture of a female Chimpanzee and her baby and below is written "Save Our Chimpanzees". Above the board in large character prints is this message "LET US PROTECT OUR PRECIOUS GREAT APES AND TUBAH UPLAND FOREST."