



Learning Note from Mid Term Review: Developing a pro-poor, sustainable bushmeat harvesting model in Cameroon

A formative Mid Term Review was conducted in November 2014. This learning note provides key lessons for the project and the wider development community.

Key Messages

- The project is designed to identify, implement and evaluate the key success factors in establishing a pro-poor bushmeat harvesting model for people living outside Dja Biosphere Reserve (DBR) in South Eastern Cameroon.
- The intervention aims to reduce poverty amongst poor communities through sustainable, legal, and commercial trade in wildlife meat.
- The learning based participatory approach adopted by this project has enabled it to develop in an iterative way, effectively responding to new challenges as they occur. However this approach has led to a number of delays, resulting in a shorter than planned implementation period.
- The project needs to review its updated logframe and workplan, and SMARTen its indicators.

The Darwin Initiative supports developing countries to conserve biodiversity and reduce poverty. The Darwin Initiative (funded by Defra, DFID and FCO), provides grants for projects working in developing countries and UK Overseas Territories (OTs).

Projects support:

- the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS)
- the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)
- the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES)

darwininitiative.org.uk



Introduction to the Mid Term Review

Summary of the Project

Based around the Dja Biosphere Reserve (DBR) in south-eastern Cameroon, this Darwin-funded project seeks to identify, implement and evaluate the key success factors in establishing a pro-poor bushmeat harvesting model. The intervention aims to reduce poverty amongst poor communities living in and around the DBR through the promotion of a sustainable, legal, commercial trade in wildlife meat, contributing to long-term food security whilst reducing the unregulated take of wildlife in the region. A Community Hunting Zone with sustainable offtake quotas and collection permits for traders, will legalise hunting and trade. With the right support and regulation this project should result in improved food security for vulnerable communities over the short- and long-term, whilst also enhancing conservation outcomes.

Main Conclusions of the Evaluation

In November 2014, an evaluation was conducted to assess project progress and to identify useful lessons of value to the wider Darwin community. The evaluation identified the positive balance attained by this project between its biodiversity and poverty aims, and acknowledged the urgent need for project intervention around the reserve.

There is evidence that the project is already achieving results, empowering local communities, establishing inclusive governance systems, and improving stakeholder cooperation, resulting, for example, in the creation of a local gun register. The learning based participatory approach adopted by this project has enabled this project to develop in an iterative way, effectively responding to new challenges as they occur. However this approach has led to a number of delays, resulting in a shorter than planned implementation period. Now that baseline data is available, the project needs to review its updated logframe and workplan, and SMARTen its indicators.



Evaluation Outcomes

Partnerships

The project brings together the Bristol Conservation and Science Foundation, the Living Earth Foundation, Fondation Camerounaise de la Terre Vivante, and the University of Bristol. Building upon a long history of collaboration between these institutions, this partnership brings together a beneficial mix of conservation, development, environmental and monitoring and evaluation expertise. Working through and benefiting from these existing partnerships has been vital in enabling this complex and adaptive community driven project to progress. Fondation Camerounaise de la Terre Vivante, for example, has had an important role to play in providing unparalleled access to key community and government stakeholders. The inclusion of the University of Bristol specifically to design the M&E framework and to provide ongoing M&E support has also been of particular benefit. Projects should look to external partners to provide a positive blend of required expertise.

Relevance

At the local level, consultation and project development in conjunction with local stakeholders has ensured that the project has built on previous activities and existing structures and is driven by, and

relevant to, community needs. At the national level the project is also highly relevant. It complements national biodiversity and development priorities and is formally recognised by the Ministry for Research, Science and Innovation (MRSI), as a research project of national importance. In doing so this project also contributes to the objectives of the CBD, particularly the first two objectives of the convention, that is the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components.

Efficiency

This project builds upon existing relationships and structures; partners have worked together in the target area since 2003, resulting in a good awareness of their respective skills, experiences, and modes of working. The project has also benefited substantially from existing relationships with local communities, organisations and government agencies, which have resulted in strong working relationships based on mutual understanding and trust.

Employing a Project Manager seconded from the MRSI to the local partner has added efficiency through the additional knowledge and connections this brings to the project. The appointment has also catalysed student engagement and has helped to cement a relationship of trust with the project, whilst at the same time building the capacity of a cadre of



Evaluation Outcomes continued

students interested in biodiversity.

Effectiveness

This project has effectively responded to a number of implementation challenges and, despite delays resulting from the adaptive management approach employed, continues to operate effectively. The mid-term review of this project determined that despite initial delays, the project is likely to largely achieve its intended outcome. The project is now at a stage where it has baseline data, and a strategy to establish the structures and systems necessary to effectively achieve its aims.

Impact

This project has fostered local stakeholder and partner knowledge on M&E, biodiversity, and the local socio-economic context. Learning has been facilitated by the project's distinctive approach which

casts communities as research partners rather than simply subjects to be studied. The project is also empowering communities, assisting them to establish inclusive governance systems that ensure local ownership and governance and the participation of the most vulnerable from within these communities. As a consequence of project support, for example, the number of bushmeat associations in the project area has increased from one to six. This project is also starting to have a positive impact on relations between local communities and non-government and government authorities, bringing wider benefits to natural resource management and security. It has helped to facilitate the first open discussions about hunting and trade. Community attitudes towards hunting are reported to be changing as a result. What is more, communities and guards are now starting to work together, as demonstrated by the recently created gun register.

Key Lessons for the Darwin Community

Participatory planning processes should form an integral part of project design

The central role of communities as research partners has been key to the success of this project so far. The bottom up approach to project design, involving consultations with communities and game guards, has resulted in clear project ownership amongst community members which should have associated benefits for the sustainability and legacy of the intervention. Community engagement in public forums is also key to ensuring that national conservation and development policies are informed by and respond to local realities.

An adaptive management approach can bring benefits throughout the life of the project

The project's action-research approach has resulted in substantive learning (by doing). This iterative approach to project planning and implementation is preferable to devising a preordained plan that is unlikely to be an appropriate reflection of on

the ground realities, or sufficiently responsive to unanticipated challenges. In addition to this flexibility, the project is forward looking and has already identified strategies that will be needed to support the project outcome beyond its current timeframe. This bodes well for project sustainability and legacy.

An outward looking collaborative approach that engages with externally generated knowledge builds on existing experience and helps to maximise project impact

The project has established a Community of Practice (CoP) with representation from government Ministries, TRAFFIC/IUCN, Université of Dschang Yaoundé, the Institute of Agricultural Research for Development, and the UNOPS/Tri-national Dja- Odzala-Minkébé (TRIDOM) landscape partnership. This forum enables a variety of actors to provide feedback on project strategy and activities. The project is also seeking to learn lessons from exiting established Community Hunting Zones in the region.



Providing government partners with concrete project roles can help to demonstrate tangible benefits to their departments

The involvement of government departments in defined project roles can be of great benefit in terms of project access and influence. In this case the Fondation Camerounaise de la Terre Vivante, for example, has had an important role to play in providing unparalleled access to communities and sensitive community information such as the number of guns held and species hunted, as well facilitating a close working relationship with relevant government institutions. This has all been facilitated by the in country project manager, seconded to FCTV from the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation (MSRI).

Overambitious project proposals can result in implementation delays

Whilst the collaborative adaptive management approach adopted by this project has had undoubted benefits, it has contributed to delays in defining the parameters of the model. In fact the project partners spent the first twelve months defining the parameters of the model (including collection of socio-economic and biological baseline data), twice as long originally envisaged. However this

unanticipated delay is not solely down to the project's collaborative approach, but is also a result of the over ambitious original project design. Achieving a balance between realism and ambition in project design is a difficult but important task, particularly since real world conservation rarely adheres to a linear logical framework.

It is important to ensure that projects capture the full range of poverty benefits of their intervention

This project has demonstrated a good balance between its biodiversity and poverty elements, particularly through its work to develop alternative livelihoods strategies for the poorest and most vulnerable. However, project activities are likely to generate some additional, perhaps less immediately obvious, poverty benefits which are not currently being documented. In this case the project should consider capturing a broader range of poverty benefits including security (for example through the creation of a gun register), empowerment (including local leadership development and support to the development of associations), and vulnerability (particularly through project benefits to the most vulnerable). This will necessitate further reflection on the appropriate M&E approach to capture this additional information.

The Darwin Initiative aims to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of resources around the world including the UK's Overseas Territories. The Darwin Initiative projects work with local partners to help countries rich in biodiversity but poor in resources to fulfil their commitments under the CBD, the Nagoya Protocol, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) and CITES. The Initiative is funded by the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and from 2011, the Department for International Development. It is administered by the UK Government's Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Since 1992, the Darwin Initiative has committed over £113million to over 943 projects in 159 countries.

This learning note was produced by LTS International Ltd. www.ltsi.co.uk

For more information on the Darwin Initiative see <http://darwininitiative.org.uk>

Darwin Initiative Secretariat, Defra. Zone 1/15, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Bristol BS1 6EB. Tel: 0117 372 3599 Email: Darwin@defra.gsi.gov.uk