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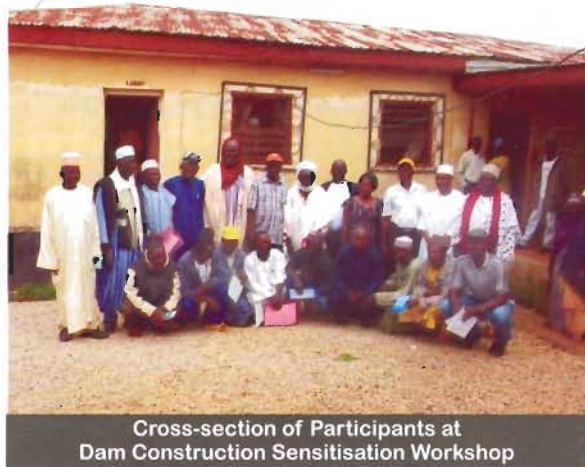
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Mambilla Plateau Dam Construction: Project Advocates for Environmentally Sustainable Options

The Participatory Forest Management Project (PFMP) in its attempt to be proactive towards a Federal Government of Nigeria project of dam construction on the Mambilla Plateau, organized two sensitization workshops in its two project sites for the major stakeholders in communities in and around Tep, the proposed location of the dam project. Tep (N06o 41.939' E011o 09.313'. Elevation: 4042ft) is a community located some 15km from Gembu, the headquarter of Sardauna LGA. The vegetation is riparian.

This workshop was a forum for a public discourse on the effects of development projects especially dam construction; on the Mambilla Plateau ecosystem. The forum provided opportunity for stakeholders to exhaustively discuss among others; the crucial need for an Environmental Impact Assessment before commencement; and the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in discerning the beneficial and detrimental impacts of the proposed project on the ecosystem and community in the highlands in general.

Participants were of communities within development appointees and Local Government State and Local Establishments/Institutions proposing to work on matter specialists,



Cross-section of Participants at
Dam Construction Sensitisation Workshop

drawn from representatives Mambilla project area, agencies, political elected representatives at and Ward levels, Federal, Government institutions, private and corporations working on the Mambilla, subject consultants and experts in

diverse but relevant fields, schools on the Mambilla, community based organizations, and interested individuals. A total of 110 participants were invited from communities within the Mambilla project area.

While participants recognised the importance of dam to the socio-economic and technological development of any society, they still recommended that lessons from failed dam projects across the world should not be ignored. If possible, alternative sources of generating electricity should be explored on the Mambilla Plateau.

Forest User Groups Empowered Through Micro-credit Scheme



Bee Keepers FUG Yelwa receiving loan from PFMP staff

NCF/RSPB Participatory Forest Management initiated at both the Donga and Mambilla sites through village based stakeholder analysis using focus group discussion sessions centered on resource use, benefits sharing and future role of state and local government. The dialogue facilitated the evolution of the formation of a number of interest groups called forest user groups (FUGs) and forest management committees (FMCs) in the two project areas.

The FUGs formed in each community were based on the resource derived from the forests and the popular strong village based groups; fishermen/women, hunters/trappers, beekeepers, farmers, women and protection -volunteer guard

(mostly youths). The FMCs comprise representatives of FUGs. Since its creation, members have been pursuing this goal relentlessly, working together with Project staff implementing project activities. For now, there are two operational sub-committees Resources monitoring and NTFPs off-take/market price.

The project in recognition of the need to facilitate effective operations of these groups initiated a micro-credit scheme that allows members to be actively involved in a revolving loan scheme. The sum of four hundred thousand Naira (#400,000) was shared among the FUGs in the communities located in the two project sites- two hundred thousand Naira each (#200,000).

The Donga Valley Site has since successfully disbursed a total of two hundred thousand Naira to support members of the various FUGs in Buru, Afrobe and Akwabe communities. The Mambilla Plateau Site on the other hand has also disbursed loans on a revolving scheme to members of different FUGs in Ture, Nji and Yelwa communities. Beneficiaries have received loans ranging from five thousand Naira to twenty thousand Naira for the purpose of farming, produce marketing, livestock farming and marketing, food processing, poultry and beekeeping.

A two-month moratorium was allowed for each loan beneficiary and a repayment schedule of six months was agreed upon, commencing from January 2007.



Project Team and the Ekuri Initiative Group

PFM Project Team on Experience-Sharing Visit to Ekuri Initiative Project

The objective was to enhance the knowledge and experience of project team on sustainable management of renewable natural resources. Ekuri is located in Akpongo Local Government Area of Cross Rivers State, Nigeria.

Some of the lessons learnt from the trip range from the strategies for promoting sustainable and participatory community forest management and the benefits of involving major stakeholders in the eco-tourism plan of community based forests. The trip was made between March 31 April 2, 2006.

Adult Literacy Programme Rekindled with Environmental Messages

The importance of having a literate community for effective propagation of the tenets and ethics of sustainable development and utilisation of natural resources, informed the PFM Project's choice of resuscitating the moribund adult literacy programme (ALP) of both the Sardauna and Kurmi Local Government Areas of Taraba State. This was particularly in communities in and around the PFM Project sites.

The resuscitation effort involved a fact finding trip to the heads of the Adult Education Unit in the local government headquarters. The trip revealed the need to facilitate a re-training programme for the instructors of ALP. This was promptly responded to with a plan for a one-day re-orientation workshop for such instructors in each of the Project Sites.

The two workshops, facilitated by the NCF, Education Adviser-Dr. Tunde Lawal were attended by 28 instructors -15 from Mambilla and 13 from Donga on the 21st and 23rd, 2006.

The workshops availed participants the opportunity of acquiring and practising the skills of infusing environmental messages into their ALP topics and teaching-learning activities. In addition, they were trained in the art of effective use of the National Mass Literacy Curriculum through proper lesson planning, instructional delivery strategies, improvisation of resource materials and utilisation of both cognitive and affective based evaluation exercises.

As part of strategies for promoting sustainable involvement of these instructors it was agreed that more training opportunities should be made available for them in the nearest future. They also requested for material support from the Project while the



A Cross Section of ALP Instructors at the Re-orientation Workshop

Project Team promised to liaise more with local government authorities for institutional support for ALP and its instructors.

Forging Partnership for Community-based Conservation: The PFM Project /FFI t4CD Initiative

Technologies for Conservation and Development (t4cd) is one project of a wide range within Flora and Fauna International's (FFI) portfolio aimed at increasing accessibility to the benefits of technologies within the conservation and development communities through information sharing and practical engagement with field level projects.

Stemming from t4cd's discussions with NCF and the FFI Africa

Programme, a workshop to investigate how technologies, and in particular ICTs, could assist practitioners in forest resources management to meet their conservation and sustainable development objectives was hosted in Jalingo between 29th and 30th August 2006 by the PFM Project under the sponsorship of FFI. The workshop was facilitated by Ken Banks and Zce Cullen from the I4cd project, and Dr. Daniel Pouakouyou, FFI Programme Manager, Central/West Africa.

Twenty (20) participants drawn from NCF, the PFM Project, Taraba and Adamawa State Department of Forestry and Ministry of Environment, as well as local government forestry units located within the PFM Project Sites attended the workshop.

The two-day workshop recognised and accepted the need for immediate sourcing and application of technologies for a more effective implementation of conservation and development projects. Specifically, the Donga Valley was considered for a possible trial of a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA)-based software system (TracElite or CyberTracker) to facilitate data collection on illegal activities primarily slash and burn agriculture and illegal logging.

The Site was also considered as an appropriate choice for an initial trial of ICTs and remote power supply to enhance their environmental education and community engagement programmes. This was based on the noted existence of an already well developed community education project and a rural development officer in post with the capacity to drive the implementation of the project, in conjunction with other colleagues. The outcome of this partnership endeavour between NCF and FFI through the PFM Project is an indicator of an assurance of the sustainability of the project beyond its present funding period.



The PFMP Team at one of the syndicate sessions during the workshop

PFM Project Facilitated the Construction of Community Clinic in Buru

The second coming of the PFM Project into the Buru Community of the Donga Valley Site marked a paradigm shift in the practice of conservation. This is because, the Project recognised the importance of having a healthy population as a tool for preaching sustainable development ethics and practices.

As a way of concretely demonstrating this shift in paradigm, the Donga Valley PFM Site supported the community proposal for the building of a ten-bed community clinic in Buru.

The community provided the human resources for the building project while the PFM Project provided part of the material resources from its meagre financial resources.

The result however is that the Clinic has been completed and commissioned with the Site Manager, Mr. Abraham Garba, and his team facilitating the posting of qualified health personnel and constant supply of drugs by the Kurmi Local Government authorities to the health centre.

RSPB Team Visited PFM Project Sites in Nigeria

A three-man team from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the persons of Alex Hipkiss, Paul Buckley & David Chrismargin visited the PFM Project Sites in Donga Valley and Mambilla Plateau in Taraba State between 6th and 17th December 2006. The trip provided the team an opportunity for an on the spot assessment of how well and how far the 5-year PFM Project has been implemented. The team interacted with different groups of forest users and Forest Management Committees whose set up were facilitated by the Project. In one of its comments the team commended the community participation approach adopted by project and advised on the immediate use of the existing management plan developed during the first phase of the project. The trip also provided the team an opportunity to share experience with the Ugandan project of RSPB which is equally focused on participatory forest management.



Alex Hipkiss, RSPB and some Representatives of other stakeholders inspecting Clinic Building Project



The RSPB Team posing with a community leader

LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS IN PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT: RDO's Experience in Donga Valley and Mambilla Plateau PFM Project Sites

Forest management can only succeed with the full support, and active involvement, of local people. The rural development scheme of the NCF/RSPB PFM project, Taraba state cover five (5) major forest communities clusters- Yelwa, Ture-Nji, Buru, Akwabe, and Afrobe. In summary, the project expects to achieve livelihood outcomes that will result in more income, increased well-being, reduced vulnerability, improved food security and more sustainable use of natural resources with the rural communities we work with. Since inception we have learnt from experience working in these communities that the level of access to forest resources and markets, the mixture of indigene and stranger-headed households, the type of demographic changes that are taking place and livelihood strategies vary greatly from one community to another. Communities are also strongly demarcated along political lines, between different groups of elites, elders and youths. Thus, understanding this diversity has been essential and an exceptional challenge in order to facilitate appropriate 'people-oriented' forest management initiatives that have sustainable rural livelihood implications as its back-bone.

When we started, defining a 'community' was partly a challenge. Now there is a greater awareness that communities in these forest regions of Taraba State are generally socially heterogeneous. They are primarily distinguished on the basis of contrasting forest conditions, demographic changes and access to forest resources and markets. Perhaps the most significant factor distinguishing different households and individuals in these areas are their ethnic origin. People in these areas make the distinction between indigenes who originate from the area and strangers, who include short and long-term settlers from outside the communities.

Livelihood perspectives in the communities

The relative abundance of wildlife around high forest edge settlements offers good opportunities for hunting and trapping. Bushmeat, being easy to reserve, relatively light to carry and of high commercial value, is one of the few profitable enterprises for men.

Over the past years, a new type of 'plantation' farming has been established by some indigenes especially those in the Donga valley community axis and strangers who have access to capital and cheap labour. In contrast to 'traditional' land clearance practices, most trees on 'plantation farms' are clear-felled and burnt, by owner-individuals themselves or by using hired labour and chainsaws. These plantation farms especially of cocoa are used by their owners not only to earn cash from farm sales but also to generate income from the salvage value of felled timber species. Some of the valuable timber species exploited, also provide economically important non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for less wealthy households. Since elders and elites profit most from timber exploitation, farming and land sales to strangers, little consideration is given to the impact that these trends are having on relatively poor households who rely on NTFPs as one of their main sources of income.

Rural development strategies

Strategies adopted via the rural development scheme of the project to impact positively on the livelihood situation of the forest community dwellers include:

- intensive awareness raising programmes with the communities through the 23 forest user groups (Mambilla plateau=11; Donga valley=12) and 5 Forest management committees (MP=2; DV=3) facilitated so far.
- Training of FUGs and FMCs to improve their leadership and organizational skills
- Revolving loan scheme for user groups
- Adult literacy programme
- Income Generation Activities and potentials Assessment

Opportunities

Some opportunities that have been discovered to exist in these circumstances described above with their implications for sustainable livelihoods for the forest communities have enabled:

(a) the project to adopt strategies aimed at strengthening those opportunities that focus on developing decision making systems to regulate access rights (especially of women) and revenue sharing arrangements where applicable, particularly in relation to regulated exploitation of games and timber species that are also important sources of NTFPs.

(b) Practical solutions to be sought through dialogue with community people to the problem of crop damage by wild animals especially baboons as in the case of Yelwa cluster communities, since this is a major problem and a challenge to income generation.

We are also considering opportunities that aim to increase the local value-added of commercially important NTFPs. In order to achieve this objective, the strategies adopted include: providing information on current prices of commercially important NTFPs in regional markets and on the value added throughout the different stages of processing and marketing; developing low-cost techniques to facilitate the processing and marketing of commercially important NTFPs, such as would add relatively high value to the products.

Despite these numerous challenges, our experiences have added to the global perception that 'people-oriented' forest management represents one of the most promising strategies to address conservation and livelihood issues.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bells and flowers

- Kene and Chy's heart glowed at each other when they first met in January 2003. Ever since what started as casual friendship was consummated in holy matrimony on June 2nd and 3rd 2006 at the Church of the Holy Spirit, St. Paul's University Chapel, Awka Anambra State Nigeria. Kene is the Rural Development Officer on the NCF-RSPB PFM Project, Taraba State Nigeria. The project team represented NCF live at the traditional and church wedding ceremonies!



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