



**Indigenous peoples' participation in mapping
of traditional forest resources
for sustainable livelihoods and great ape conservation**

Report to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

by

John Nelson and Messe Venant
Forest Peoples Programme

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Forest Peoples
Programme

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By John Nelson, Africa Policy Advisor, Forest Peoples Programme
and

Messe Venant, Cameroon Projects Coordinator, Forest Peoples Programme

Three other Cameroon case studies appear in FPP's book, ***Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas in Africa: From principles to practice***, edited by John Nelson and Lindsay Hossack, and published in 2003 to coincide with the 3rd World Parks Congress

These include:

'One forest and two dreams: the constraints imposed on the Baka in Miatta by the Dja Wildlife Reserve'

by Samuel Nguiffo

'Protected areas and indigenous peoples: the paradox of conservation and survival of the Baka in Moloundou region (south-east Cameroon)' by Benoit Ndameu, and

'The extent of Bagyeli Pygmy involvement in the development and Management Plan of the Campo Ma-an UTO'

by Joseph Claude Owono.

All are available on FPP's website: www.forestpeoples.org



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Cover photograph: Baka women from around Boumba Bek National Park listen to discussions about the park management plan.

Photographs: John Nelson

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of work by Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), le Centre pour l'Environnement et Développement (CED) and local partners with Baka hunter-gatherer settlements located near the new Boumba Bek National Park in Cameroon to map their traditional territories, which overlap areas of high concentrations of western lowland gorillas and chimpanzees, and to help them secure their rights while also protecting these endangered species. The project is linked to long-term participative mapping processes supported by FPP with forest communities across Cameroon, and concentrated and collaborative efforts with WWF in south-east Cameroon to map and protect communities' ancestral lands that have become overlapped by the new Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks.

The report provides an overview of FPP's work since 2000 to support forest communities in Central Africa to secure their land rights through the application of the so-called 'new conservation paradigm' linking conservation with protection for community rights. This new approach is the result of many years of negotiation which have resulted in widespread agreement between civil society, international conservation organisations and national governments that changes to conservation approaches and laws are needed to protect communities' rights and livelihoods. FPP's work in Africa had previously highlighted gaps in the application of this modern approach, gaps which FPP and its local partners have since been addressing through practical, direct and field-based activities with local and indigenous peoples that are resulting in concrete results for forest communities. This UNEP-funded project is one such initiative.

This initiative around Mambele, which lies near the borders of Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks, has helped to illustrate significant overlaps between communities' forests and those used by gorillas in and around these protected areas and their associated logging concessions and commercial safari zones. It provided an opportunity to document community attitudes towards gorilla and ape conservation in a region where both local and indigenous communities have a strong pro-conservation bias for these key species. This project enabled communities to present the results of their participatory mapping to government agencies responsible for the development and implementation of the management plans for their forests.

Critically, this project supported forest communities to highlight publicly their concerns about numerous, serious allegations of human rights abuses by forest guards who are charged with enforcing national park rules. These regulations ban all access and use inside national parks in Cameroon, even where they overlap peoples' ancestral lands. The persistent pattern of complaints by these communities echoes those of forest peoples from in and around most national parks in Cameroon's forest zone. They hint at a systematic failure to reconcile modern conservation approaches with old laws that do not protect community rights.

This project helped communities to bring these concerns into a new open dialogue with conservation agencies charged with protecting Cameroon's forests and wildlife. Through negotiation and the development of joint, field-based activities it supported the establishment of a collaborative agenda shared by communities and conservation agencies that will enable community rights to be protected in the park management plan while conservation objectives are also achieved. This UNEP project has helped to set the stage for the development and implementation of a more cooperative and successful conservation strategy for great apes in south-east Cameroon.

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Project Overview

This report provides an overview of findings drawn from work by FPP, CED and local partners with Baka hunter-gatherer settlements located near the new Boumba Bek National Park in Cameroon, between July 2007 and July 2008 using funding from UNEP.¹ This project involved supporting these communities to map their traditional territories, which overlap areas of high concentrations of western lowland gorillas and chimpanzees, and to help them engage WWF and government conservation agencies over ways to maintain their livelihoods while also protecting these endangered species. The project was linked into long-term mapping processes by FPP with forest communities across Cameroon, and concentrated and collaborative efforts with WWF in south-east Cameroon to map and protect communities' ancestral lands that have become overlapped by the new Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks.

This project has helped to illustrate significant overlap between communities' forests and those used by gorillas in and around Boumba Bek National Park and associated forest areas. It has provided an opportunity to document community attitudes towards gorilla and ape conservation in a region where both local and indigenous communities have a strong pro-conservation bias for these key species. The project enabled communities to present the results of their participatory mapping to government agencies responsible for the development and implementation of the management plans for these forests. This project supported the establishment of a collaborative agenda shared by communities and conservation for enabling community rights to be protected in the park management plan while also achieving conservation objectives. This UNEP project has helped to set the stage for the development and implementation of a more cooperative and successful conservation strategy for indigenous peoples and great apes in south-east Cameroon.

Linking People with Policy Making

Since 2001 Forest Peoples Programme (FPP)² and our local partners³ have consulted with well over 300 hunter-gatherer Bagyeli, Bakola, and Baka⁴ 'Pygmy'⁵ communities in the Congo Basin concerning the impact of forest management and conservation plans, and community aspirations. The evidence we have collected during hundreds of meetings suggests that many forest plans have had serious negative impacts on the rights and livelihoods of indigenous forest communities and this has compounded their severe socio-political marginalisation.⁶ We also found that there is broad consensus amongst Pygmy communities that their forests are not being adequately protected from outsiders, including loggers, commercial poachers, and those conservation initiatives that try to stop them from continuing to use their forests to serve their subsistence needs. We also found that with few exceptions,⁷ almost no Pygmies are involved in discussions about plans for logging concessions and conservation areas, even when they overlap forests that these communities have used for countless generations. This marginalisation has occurred despite existing NGO agency guidelines,⁸ national laws,⁹ and even international treaty agreements¹⁰ which stipulate that they must be informed and involved.

For many years FPP has worked to develop and promote models of cooperation between communities and conservation organisations based upon principles that recognise the rights of indigenous people to use, own and control their traditional territories, and which protect their traditional knowledge and skills. These new conservation principles are embodied in, *inter alia*, WWF International's Statement of Principles on Indigenous Peoples and Conservation from 1996,¹¹ subsequent World Conservation Union (IUCN) resolutions on Indigenous Peoples (1996) and World Commission on Protected Areas guidelines (1999), and decisions by the Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Our work shows that these conservation principles are not being applied properly in most of the areas we have examined in

the Congo Basin. This situation persists in 2008 despite a supportive declaration at the World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa, in 2003 and the IUCN World Conservation Congress (2004) and positive moves forward by the CBD Conference of Parties (COP 7 in 2004, as well as COP 8 in 2005). It was reinforced by WWF in 2008 through a restatement of policy and the publication of new guidelines,¹² and it will be a strong theme for discussions during the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in 2008.

FPP in the Congo Basin

In the Congo Basin¹³ FPP supports communities to document their forest use, and to engage with conservation organisations and logging companies¹⁴ to ensure that their rights are protected. We help them notify key stakeholders about the negative impacts they document,¹⁵ and provide support for community representatives to meet with government authorities and conservation agencies to discuss forest plans affecting their communities.¹⁶ We have helped many of these communities to prepare detailed maps of forest use based upon their own data,¹⁷ and to submit these maps to forest planners developing conservation and logging proposals.¹⁸ We have also helped them to participate in new forums¹⁹ for discussion and reconciliation with other local communities, and with national and international agencies through their participation in key meetings.²⁰ So far, FPP projects have helped hunter-gatherer communities to secure and protect their access, use and residence rights to forests located within and around national parks²¹ and in Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB) logging concessions located within the Sangha conservation landscape.²²

All of these processes have been accompanied by an emphasis on local capacity building through community-based activities, sometimes accompanied by technical support for community-based micro-initiatives to address their urgent livelihood needs, including improving their access to health, education and agricultural support.²³ We also support analyses of national legislation,²⁴ and monitor COMIFAC²⁵ priorities that encourage improved civil society participation in forest planning,²⁶ and regional harmonisation of forest laws.²⁷ We work to ensure that the lessons from our work are made widely available through the media and our networks.²⁸ Our scope is wide and includes the development of recommendations supporting implementation of Article 10(c) of the Convention on Biological Diversity in several continents, including in Cameroon an analysis of community forest use in and around the Dja Reserve.^{29 30} This complements FPP's continuous assessment of donor policies affecting communities,³¹ forest certification,³² and increasing technical support to develop new initiatives helping communities secure their forest rights.³³

Supporting Forest Communities to Participate in Planning

Since 2001 FPP has been supporting Baka communities in South-east Cameroon to document the impact of protected areas on their livelihoods.³⁴ This research revealed the systematic way in which conservation projects denied their rights, undermined their livelihoods and culture, and alienated them from conservation efforts. In most places in Cameroon increasing poverty and vulnerability amongst indigenous peoples are by-products of conservation projects, whose impacts are, for many people, indistinguishable from logging. Our dialogues with communities and local support organisations since 2001 has led to a series of initiatives to support forest communities all over Cameroon to document their situation and their forest use, to secure official recognition of their rights, and to engage with government and other stakeholders who want to use the forests in which these communities live.

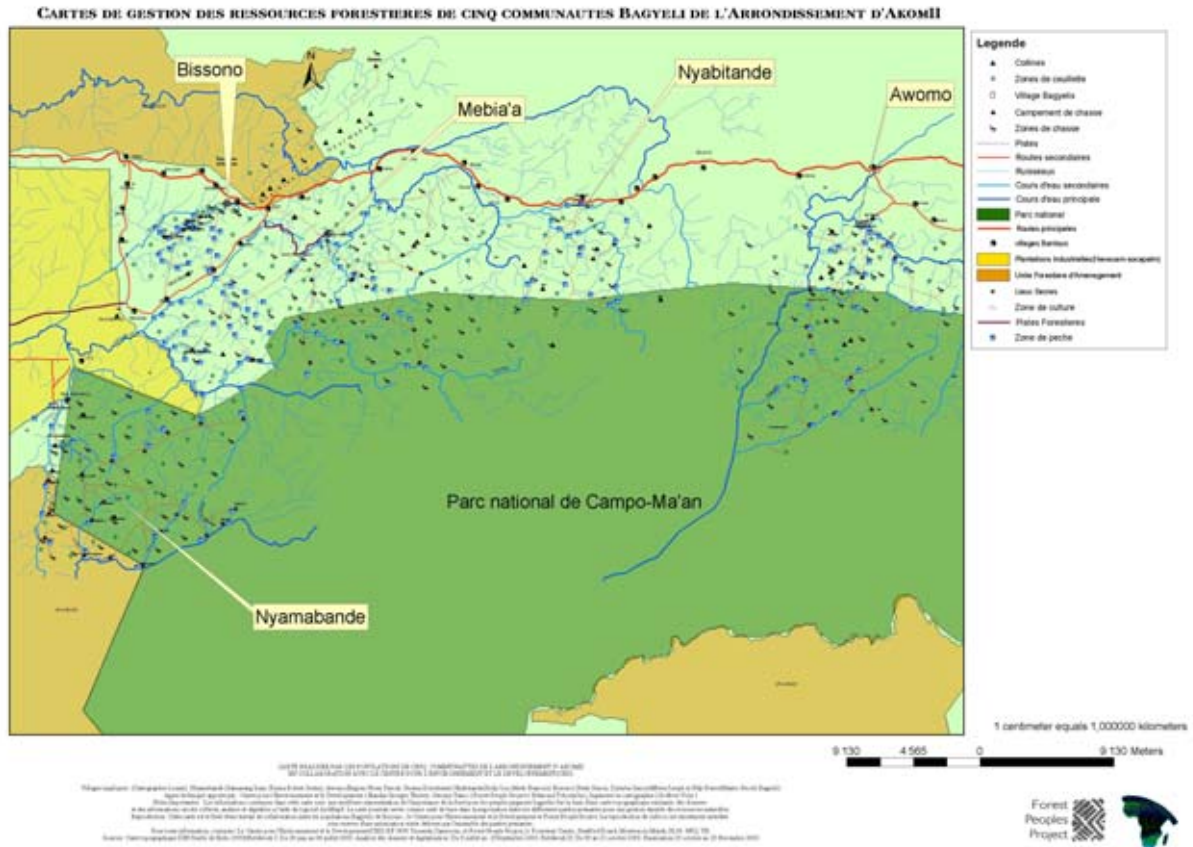


Baka want to participate in the management of Boumba-Bek National Park which overlaps their traditional lands

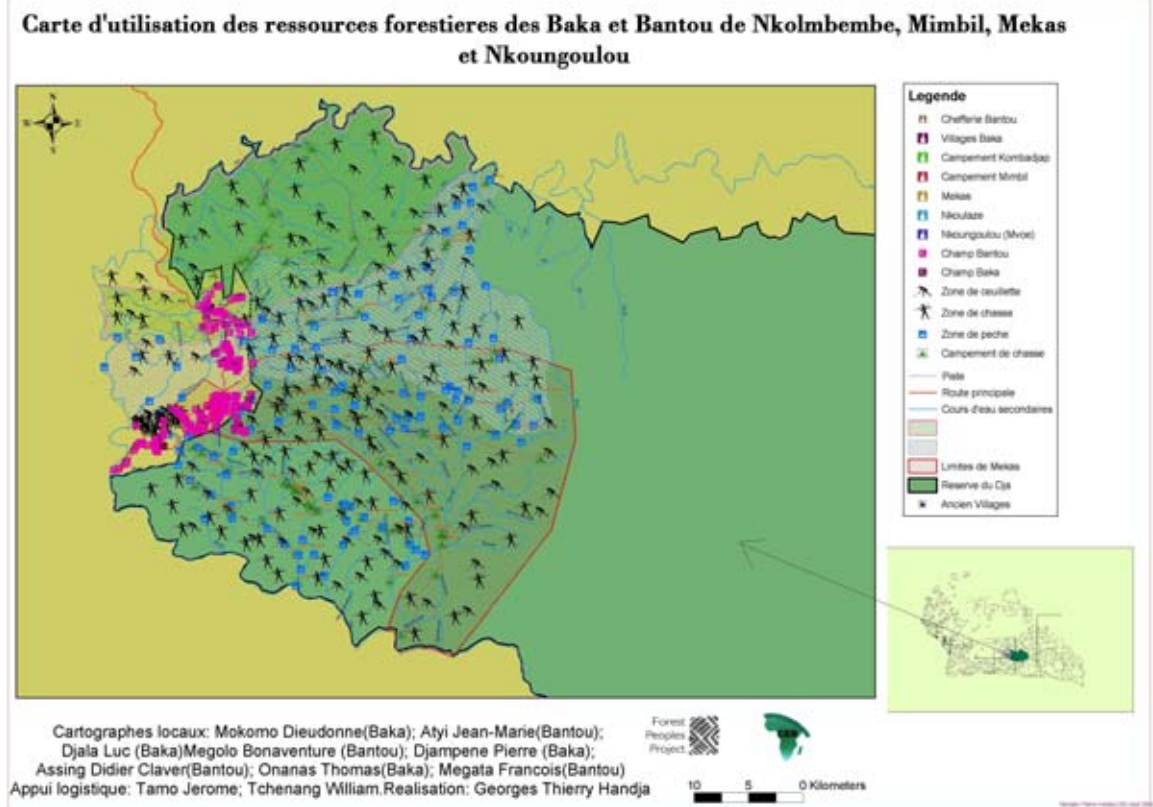
For example, around Campo Ma'an National Park in Cameroon's Ocean Department, FPP helped Bagyeli document the impacts of the new park on their livelihoods,³⁵ to participate in meetings with government authorities and park staff in 2002, to map their forest use and then present this to park authorities including the government, the World Bank and park managers, WWF, in 2003 and 2004. This work resulted in changes to the park management plan in 2005 to recognise Bagyeli access and use rights in the park, and in 2006 constructive engagement and cooperation by FPP with WWF over significant threats to the sustainability of these forests.

During 2004 and 2005 FPP and our local partners CED carried out community consultations and mapping with Baka around the Dja Wildlife Reserve, where FPP has been working since 2001.³⁶ Local communities' maps (see below) are now being used to advise the Government of Cameroon and the CBD Secretariat over implementation of the convention in Cameroon, and will be crucial in the development of the reserve's new management plan by ECOFAC.

Indigenous peoples' participation in mapping of traditional forest resources for sustainable livelihoods and great ape conservation



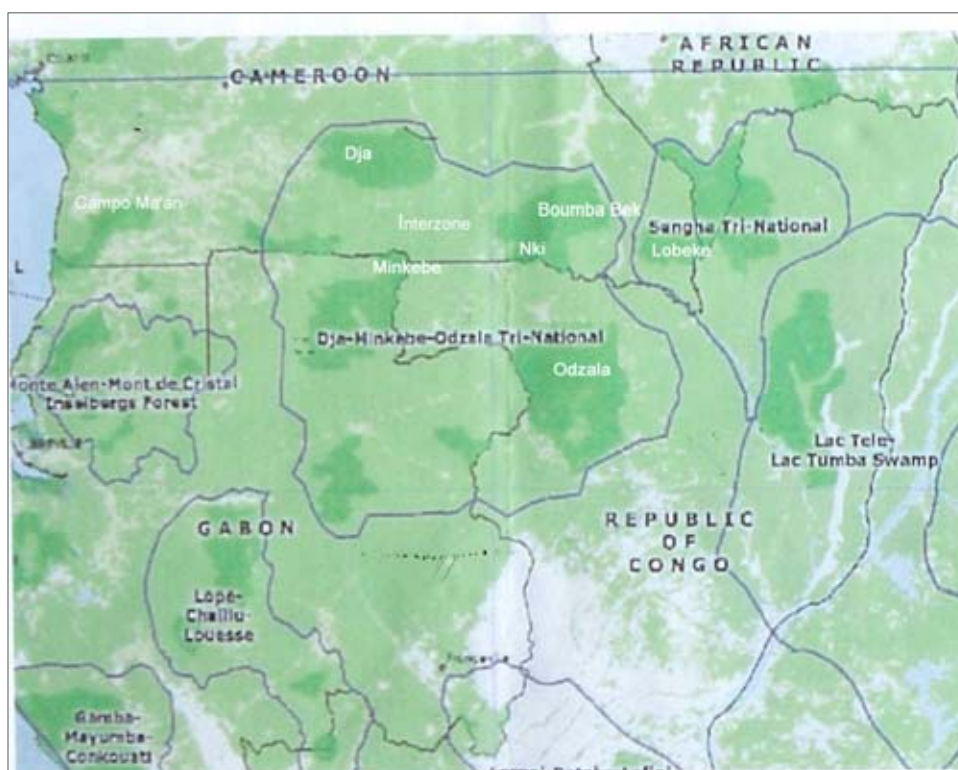
Bagyeli communities documented their forest use in and around Campo Ma'an National Park, leading to changes to park management.



Maps of forest use by communities from the western Dja underline the need for greater community-conservation dialogue

Since 2005 FPP has been engaged in a robust and constructive dialogue with WWF about the situation in Central Africa. This has taken place through meetings with WWF international and local staff in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo; Gland, Switzerland; Moreton-in-Marsh, UK; Washington DC, USA; and Yaoundé, Cameroon. This dialogue led first to the development of joint strategies around Campo Ma'an and collaborative plans for changes to WWF projects in South-east Cameroon to enable the implementation of WWF's 1996 policy protecting indigenous peoples' rights, and then to collaboration with WWF-CAR to support Bayaka in the Dzanga Special Reserve to secure their resource rights.

During 2006 in conjunction with WWF, FPP supported local partners to initiate more mapping processes with forest communities from around Nki and Boumba-Bek National Parks, and this is supporting 2008 discussions concerning the development of management plans for both parks. These processes are targeting the establishment of specific protections for community forest rights in and around both of these new national parks, which are part of the TRIDOM conservation landscape established through the Congo Basin Forest Partnership.



Protection of community rights in forest management plans will help prevent conflicts and make conservation more effective, for example across the TRIDOM Conservation Landscape (Dja-Minkebe-Odzala-Tri-National) overlapping Gabon, the Republic of Congo and Cameroon

Across the TRIDOM and Sangha landscapes FPP and its local partners are developing new community-based conservation models that are expected to lead to a reduction in conflict between conservation, logging, and community interests, together with improved and more cost-effective biodiversity protection. These models will also support the application of laws and international conventions protecting community rights *and* biodiversity in the Congo Basin, including government commitments to the CBD, to which all Central African governments are signatory.

FPP's programme aims to help all hunter gatherers and forest communities in general to document their forest use, to become informed about forestry and conservation plans affecting their lands, to participate meaningfully in planning processes at local and national levels, to secure their forest rights, and to draw lessons from these experiences for mainstreaming into all Congo Basin conservation programmes as well as into the plans of logging and mining companies.³⁷ A central objective is to promote the development and application of forest rules and regulations which respect communities' continuing reliance on forests, and their rights, and which also help to protect biodiversity.

UNEP Supports Hunter-Gatherer Communities in Cameroon

There is a strong demand by Baka communities to create their own maps of forest use in Cameroon, especially in and around protected areas where the enforcement of laws prohibiting their forest access and use undermine their subsistence and welfare. We also know that these communities are very anxious about the impacts of outside pressures on their forests, especially commercial poaching which ruins the forest for subsistence users, especially Baka whose livelihoods are based upon forest hunting and gathering.

In many places there is, therefore, a natural opening point for discussions between communities and conservation agencies over the issue of great ape conservation. Experience shows that this cannot occur until an air of trust is established. Such trust can be established by revisions to forest management plans which protect indigenous communities' forest rights, and which establish mechanisms enabling hunter-gatherer communities' views to help guide management. Our work with forest communities in Cameroon shows that community-based mapping processes can make this happen. The main barriers to participatory mapping are financial and technical issues for local support organisations, low literacy rates amongst indigenous peoples, and a long history of discrimination against forest communities and especially indigenous peoples.

FPP and our partners have developed methods to help overcome these barriers, for example, our collaborative projects with local partners and participatory approaches with communities. We have also developed new tools, such as an icon-based GPS mapping system for use by literate and non-literate peoples, such as Baka, to allow them to document their forests themselves.



Baka traditional forest tools³⁸

In 2007 FPP developed a proposal for a community-based mapping process with Baka communities in Cameroon in an area also targeted for gorilla conservation. The aim of the project was to support communities to document their forest use, and to enter into discussions with governmental and non-governmental conservation agencies to try to devise a joint strategy to protect community forest use and rights as well as certain primate species. The work would be linked to collaborative efforts to protect the community rights established between FPP and WWF in late 2006.³⁹

In May 2007 UNEP agreed to fund this project and a Memorandum of Understanding was subsequently agreed between UNEP and FPP. Within UNEP the project was conceived and coordinated by the Major Groups and Stakeholders' Branch, and the secretariat of the Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP).

Participatory Mapping by Baka

This UNEP-funded project targeted two main objectives:

- (1) to assess and demonstrate – through the use of participatory, community-based mapping – how indigenous Baka are capable and important partners in ensuring the sustainable use of forest resources in areas targeted for ape conservation, thereby supporting increased recognition for indigenous peoples' involvement in decision-making for improved biodiversity conservation, and;
- (2) to address engaging Baka people in Cameroon to participate effectively in protected areas where great ape (gorilla and chimpanzee) protection is targeted.

FPP staff and local partners started by identifying several zones of special interest for primates, which also overlapped the Baka communities' traditional lands for hunting and gathering. This was done using two main information sources:

- (i) ecological monitoring data in the form of a summary report provided to FPP by WWF.⁴⁰ In that report researchers identified three areas of special interest for primates, around Ngatto, Ndongo and Mambele, and;
- (ii) the results of research, community interviews and consultations, and other scoping work by FPP and CED with communities in and around Nki, Boumba Bek and Lobeke National Parks since 2001, including mapping data on community use areas in forests across south-east Cameroon.

After consideration we decided to focus on an area of forest to the west of Mambele, which researchers had identified as key gorilla habitat and which also had potential overlaps with community forests. The relevant map by WWF is presented below.

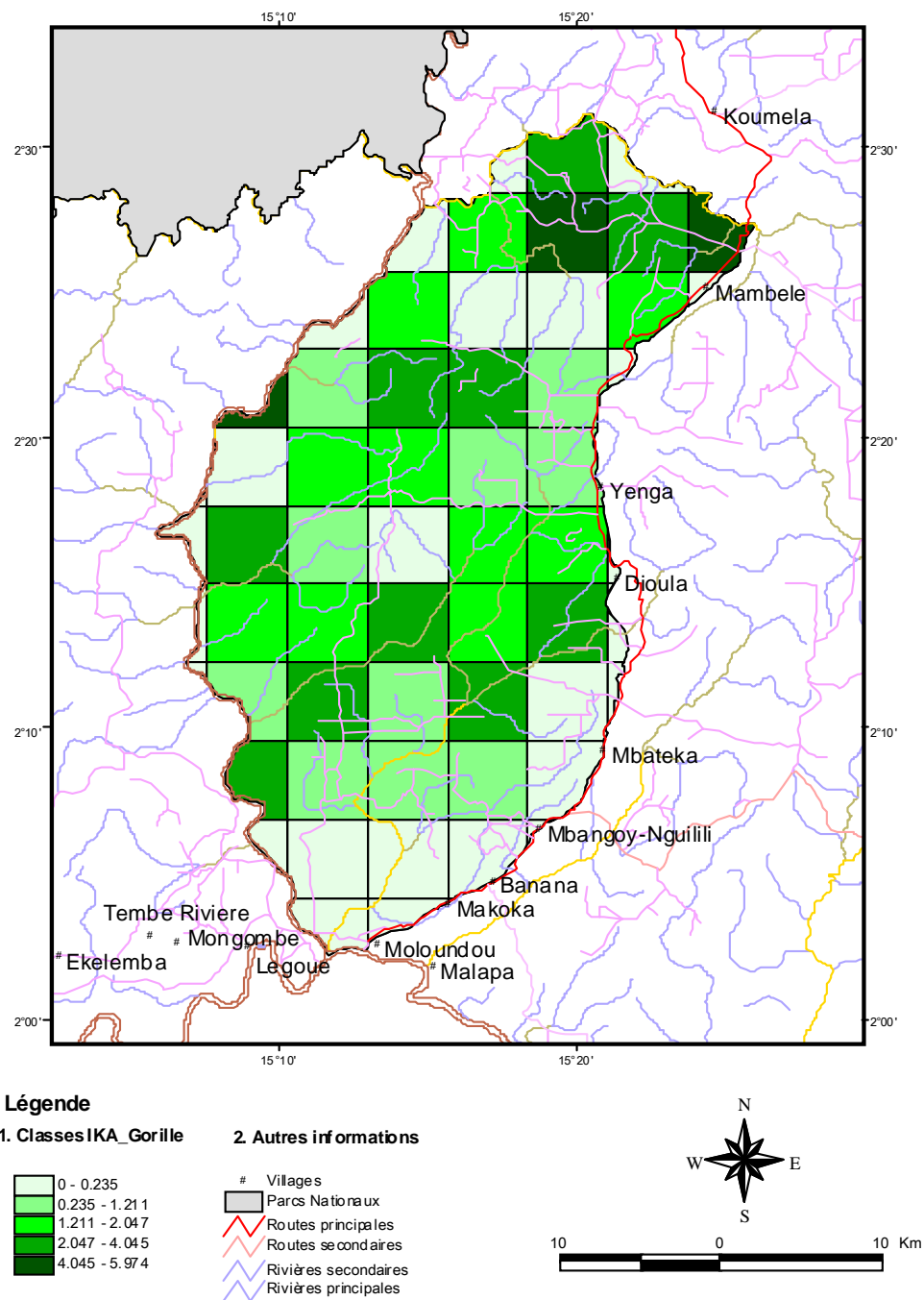


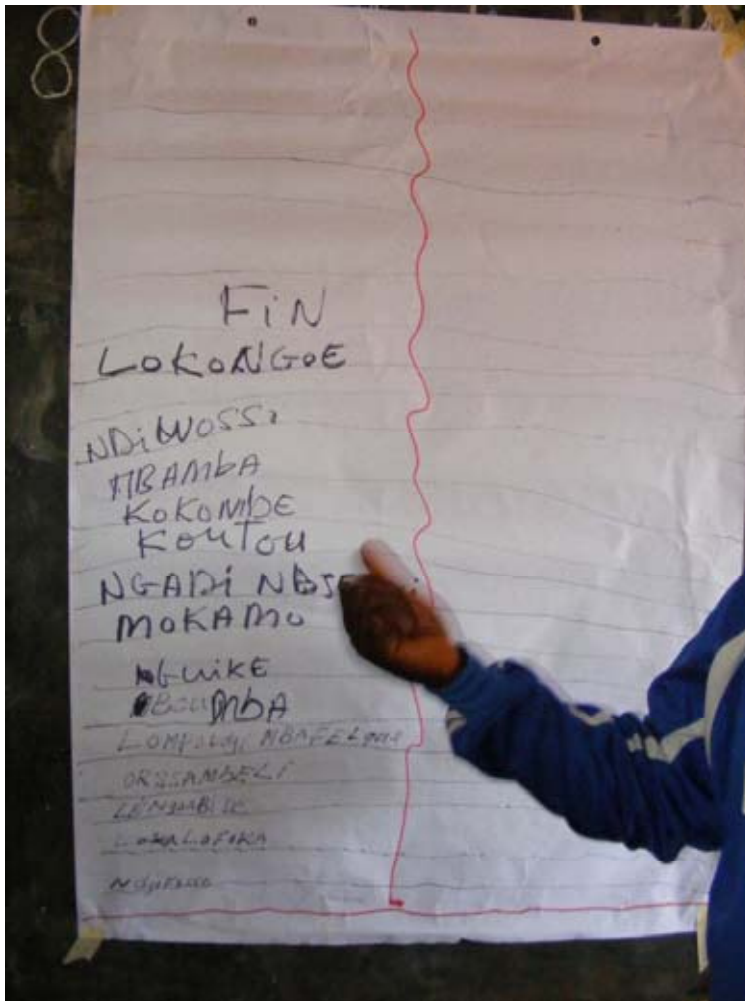
Figure 7. Distribution dans l'espace des populations de Gorilles dans la ZICGC 9 suivant les valeurs d'Indice Kilométrique d'Adondance

Source: WWF Jengi South-east Forest Programme (2008) mise en œuvre du projet 'Indigenous people's participation in mapping of traditional forest resources for sustainable livelihoods and great ape conservation' Processus de choix des sites de travail : Densités de grands primates dans trois zones à explorer.

Over the course of many months FPP and our local partners CED and CEFAID supported five Baka settlements around Mambele to learn how to map for themselves their traditional forest areas around and into Boumba Bek National Park and the adjoining forest management unit (UFA 10-015). Using the data they collected, draft and then final maps were created by CED with community members from those five communities, with continuing field support by local partner, CEFAID. During multiple meetings these maps were corrected, and then validated by those communities once they were sure that the maps accurately described their traditional forest areas.

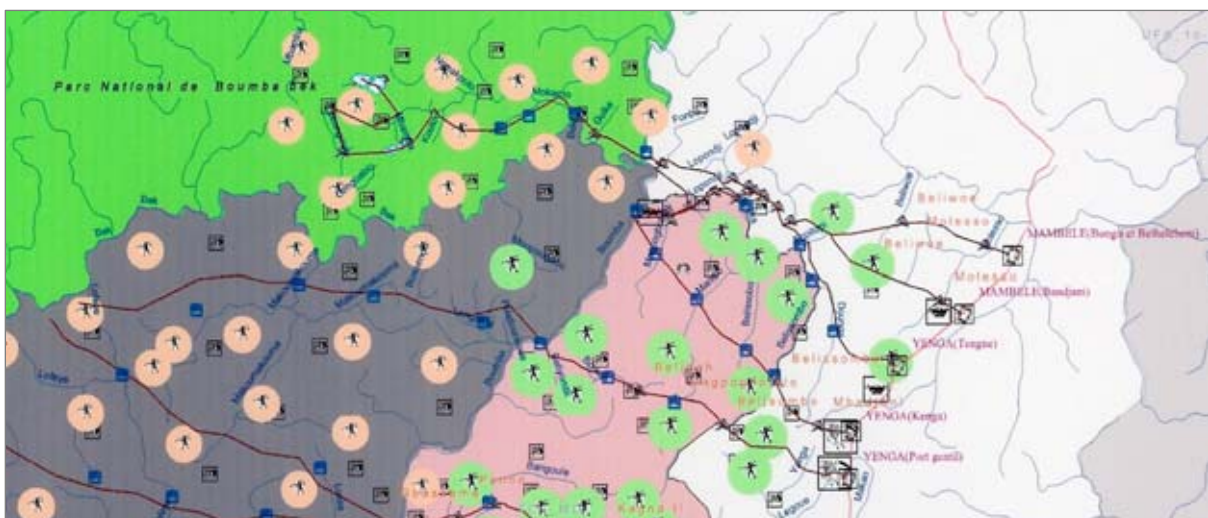


A Baka from the Mambele area explains the mapping process



A community representative reviews the names of rivers that were used to orient Baka mapping of their key forest areas.

Communities' individual maps of forest use were then incorporated into one map of Baka forest use for the areas west of Mambele. This is presented below:



Community use areas to the west of Mambele, as documented by Baka communities⁴¹

Analysis of these maps suggests extensive overlap between areas of high gorilla incidence as reported by primate researchers, and Baka forest-use areas as documented by communities. Some of the most important sites of interest to communities also occur within the boundaries of the park. From the map above one can see that all five Baka settlements around Mambele hunt and gather over a wide area of forest, including areas inside the park and the adjoining logging concession (the dark grey area) and most of the forests to either side of the tracks marked out on the map (dark brown lines). If one traces the watersheds it is easy to see that the greatest overlap between the forest use of most of these communities occurs around the area of highest gorilla incidence as indicated by WWF ecological monitoring data. Four of the Baka settlements from Mambele harvest food and medicine in these same forest blocs. These are clearly rich parcels of forest, relied upon by both man and animal.

Institutionalising Protection for Community Forest Rights

After mapping was completed and the final maps were agreed by Mambele communities, FPP and CED facilitated communities' participation in the development of joint forest management plans for the forests in and around Boumba National Park. This was linked to park-wide mapping processes that FPP and CED have been facilitating since 2006, and which are being carried out in collaboration with WWF.

As part of this process, preparatory working sessions were held with the communities, who were provided with information and technical and logistical support to prepare for meetings with the authorities, in order to ensure that their participation would be effective. During these sessions communities chose the representatives and spokespeople who would attend the meeting, who would be responsible for making a general presentation of the communities' results.⁴² These preparatory sessions were held in late June 2008, prior to a key meeting between WWF, government authorities and 15 Baka community representatives, which was eventually held on July 1, 2008 in Yokadouma at the WWF office.



Baka meeting with WWF, local NGOs and government authorities, Yokadouma, July 1, 2008

The purpose of the July 1 meeting was to discuss the outcome of the collaborative Boumba Bek and Nki mapping processes that FPP, CED and WWF have been implementing since October 2006, and to pave the way for protecting community rights in the park management plans. This includes community rights in the areas that overlap key gorilla habitat – such as around Mambele.

The community representatives who participated in that meeting were from forest settlements distributed between Moloundou on the southern national border with the Republic of Congo, and Yokadouma. Their main settlements skirt the border with Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks, along with logging and safari concessions in UFA 10-015. Baka representatives from Mambele also participated in this meeting.

During the meeting a number of issues were raised by communities.

First and foremost, communities wanted to understand why they were being put under pressure by government forest guards. Serious allegations of human rights abuses against community members by forest guards were made – including allegations of extra-judicial beatings for people found inside the park, for anyone found hunting near the park, and virtually anywhere they were encountered in the forest. These allegations echo those made by many other communities from in and around other national parks in Cameroon and Central Africa generally, which have been previously documented by FPP and our local partners.

Secondly, communities presented their forest-use maps, and explained how they had carried out the mapping of their traditional areas. Community members demonstrated the use of the GPS, and reviewed the main rivers for which the different regions of their forest were named. They described how and when they used different parts of the forest over the course of the year. They also mentioned some significant cultural sites within the forest which were important to Baka for the collection of medicines, and which were the locations of their initiation rites, such as *Ejengui*. They described numerous places traditionally used by Baka that are now overlapped by the boundaries of the national park. Finally, they asked for the lifting of restrictions against their entry into these traditional areas, that had been brought about by the creation of the park.

This was followed by a presentation by WWF of the results of their own participatory mapping process with communities from other areas around Boumba Bek National Park. WWF's work was very well received since there was remarkable agreement between the communities' presentation of their forest use, and WWF's own assessment of the extent to which communities traditionally used forests now covered by the park. The WWF maps echoed the Mambele communities' maps: Baka use of forests in and around Boumba Bek National Park is extensive, regular and linked to key cultural sites within the park boundaries. Both sets of research illustrate the significant degree to which these forests underpin indigenous community livelihoods and culture.

At the end of the meeting there was agreement that the management plans for the parks needed to include provision for protection of community rights, and a timetable for finalising the draft management plan for Boumba Bek National Park was discussed. Completion dates for the draft management plan were not agreed, and much work remains to be done. Consultations with communities to enable them to review and input into the draft plan are now being organised, and these will continue for many months. Baka from the Mambele region want to continue their participation in this process to secure their rights and participation in the development and implementation of the park management plan.

Overcoming Tensions with Conservation

Participatory mapping with Baka from the Mambele region of south-eastern Cameroon helps to illustrate how hunter-gatherer communities rely upon extensive areas of forest to secure their subsistence. Hunter-gatherer communities want to protect these forests from outsiders to safeguard their forest livelihoods, and also to protect their most important cultural sites. The areas of forest that they use also contain areas of key gorilla habitat, and sightings of primates are common. Boumba Bek National Park has been established nearby and it is clear that the park boundaries overlap communities' traditional areas and key cultural sites.

WWF is committed to helping the Government of Cameroon protect its biodiversity, and WWF has a strong policy protecting the rights of communities in the regions where it works. In south-east Cameroon, WWF is supporting the government to implement measures to protect its forests. These measures include providing research and technical advice, and financial and logistical support to government forest guards. These forest guards are active in the Mambele area. Their arrival coincided with the establishment of Lobeke, Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks.

Over the past few years these forest guards have stopped and searched many local people, and have arrested some community people for hunting protected species, and a range of other violations of park regulations – including those forbidding all use of forest resources inside park boundaries. It is claimed that the forest guards have reduced poaching pressure by outsiders. However, there are persistent allegations of human rights abuses by forest guards against local community people, and many local communities have lost faith in the work of these guards. Yet forest guards continue to be a key point of contact between communities and the park. Local people still have little say in how best to protect their forests. Communication between communities and conservation is still very weak.

Throughout the course of this project local communities have continuously expressed their clear wish to participate in the protection of their forest, but not at the expense of their human rights, nor if it undermined their livelihoods. Local people want to be recognised as part of the solution to protecting great apes around Mambele. People from Mambele are passionate about the riches in their forest. After all, as one local Baka said:

when WWF arrived did they find this forest destroyed? No, they came because the forest was rich ... and we showed them all these places they now want to protect – we guided them through the forest to those places ... we need this forest to survive, and we should be left to continue our traditional use ... if this is done, then when people come to destroy this place (like poachers), we will be the first to report them to the authorities ... but they do not listen to us now.⁴³

Communities Conserve Already

Mambele is surrounded by key gorilla habitat, and it is common to hear the cry of chimpanzees, and to see monkeys in the trees. Mambele is also encircled by ancient settlements of indigenous peoples who rely upon the forest for their livelihoods. Participatory mapping by Baka has illustrated the significant overlap between their forest use and key primate areas. The potential for conflict between these two groups is therefore high – at least theoretically. However, around Mambele, there are strong local cultural norms preventing the hunting of most primates by the local communities, and which serves to protect them in their habitat.

Between Mambele and Moloundou the population is dominated by Baka (Pygmy) people, who are the majority rural group, and the minority Bagando (Bantu) people. Baka represent around 60% of the total rural population of the region. They are divided into a number of clans or *ye*, including the Mombito, the Kolou, the Silo, and the Ndongo, and the Mambe, who are often referred to as Kema.

The largest group of Baka come from the Kema and Mambe clans. Kema means monkey, referring to the magistrale monkey, well known for its black-and-white coat. Baka from the Kema clan do not eat any monkeys or apes. While most Baka livelihoods are dominated by hunting and gathering, along the road they also cultivate fields, like the Bagando do. They live side-by-side with the Bagando.

The Bagando are also subdivided into clans, including the Bogo, who do not eat leopard; the Bombia, who do not eat giant pangolin; the Boyele, who do not eat buffalo; and the Bodawa, whose totem is the monkey. By tradition the Bodawa do not eat monkeys or apes. They are divided into five sub-groups spread across the region between Moloundou and Mambele – the Meleke, the Dousse, the Djamsoula, the Ndedi and the Kanga.

Around Mambele, Bagando community alliances with primates run deep, partly arising from long-ago periods of conflict with other communities, and fighting during the independence period – by tradition monkeys announced dangers arriving through the forest, and this aided the Bodawa to escape. Bodawa cultural history is filled with stories of gorillas and chimpanzees helping old people and women carry heavy loads long distances through the forest, and locals believe that primates recognise Bodawa in the forest and do not attack them. They are forbidden to eat their meat. Intermarriage between local groups has widened the application of these beliefs. Many Baka also have well-established alliances with certain Bagando groups, and have adopted their customs of not eating certain animals – i.e. their totems.

In recent times these local customs have come under threat. The arrival of logging in south-east Cameroon encouraged an influx of outsiders who do not hold the same conservation beliefs, resulting in increased commercial poaching generally. And despite the great natural wealth in south-east Cameroon, mismanagement of forest and wildlife revenues is exacerbating regional poverty, and people are desperate for cash. Baka are often solicited by commercial poachers to help them find their way in the forest. Some Bodawa have taken up commercial hunting of species they would normally protect, including those they would not normally eat, like primates. These exceptional cases are often used to justify the actions of forest guards, who are currently alienating local people from conservation.

Communities and Conservation Organisations Could Conserve Together

Collaborative efforts by WWF, FPP, CED and a host of other local organisations is resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of how local and indigenous communities use forests in south-east Cameroon. The work has helped to show that communities rely upon biodiverse forests that the Government of Cameroon has pledged to protect. In south-east Cameroon community forests are now overlapped by three national parks, along with a host of logging and safari concessions. However, local people perceive almost no benefits from these conservation efforts.

Indigenous communities want to protect their remaining forests to maintain their subsistence, and their culture, but up to now they have been marginalised from most conservation interventions. Their links with conservation authorities are further undermined by what they perceive as injustices perpetrated by forest guards. Up to now, communities have been absent

from formal management of the forests upon which their livelihoods are based. Over the past decade a wide divide has opened up between conservation and indigenous communities. WWF and FPP are working together to address this problem.

UNEP's support for this project has helped to illustrate the specific situation faced by Baka hunter-gatherers around Mambele near Boumba Bek National Park. Around Mambele, indigenous communities' forests are targeted for ape conservation – both inside and outside the park. Efforts to stop poaching of endangered species have so far been based upon strict interpretation of government legislation barring all use of forest products inside national parks, and the deployment of forest guards who have lost the trust of communities. Communities feel that they have become the target of forest guards, against whom there have been serious allegations of human rights abuses. This is not an ideal situation, and without changes to approaches to conservation, future efforts to preserve primates in this multi-use forest will become more and more difficult.

Mambele's indigenous communities want to become more involved in protecting their forests and the biodiversity they contain, and there are strong culturally-linked motivations for them to do so. This collaborative project is helping conservation authorities to establish improved working relations with them. Communication by authorities with communities about their traditional forest areas is improving, and a joint agenda for protecting community rights as part of the regional conservation programme has been agreed. The Government of Cameroon has signed up to international conventions to protect these places as well as local communities' rights. It now remains to be seen how community rights will be protected.

Previous government initiatives elsewhere in Cameroon have led to increased protection for indigenous forest peoples' rights. For example, hunter-gatherer rights are now protected by the government-approved management plan for Campo Ma'an National Park in south-west Cameroon. Bagyeli now have the right to maintain access and use of their traditional areas inside this national park. In south-east Cameroon some community-use rights are protected in the management plan for Lobeke National Park. Even more robust protections need to become part of the management plans for Boumba Bek and Nki National Parks, along with all the other forests of south-east Cameroon. This project has contributed towards achieving that.

Notes

¹ As per the Memorandum of Understanding between UNEP and FPP agreed in May 2007. Within UNEP the project was conceived and coordinated by the Major Groups and Stakeholders' Branch (www.unep.org/civil_society/ as well as www.unep.org/indigenous/), and the secretariat of the Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP) www.unep.org/GRASP/.

² The Forest Peoples Programme is an international NGO, founded in 1990 and registered as a Stichting in the Netherlands and with its main office in the UK, which supports the rights of forest peoples. The organisation provides policy advice and training to indigenous peoples and other forest peoples at local national and international levels for them to secure and sustainably manage their forests, lands and livelihoods. Over the past fifteen years of its work, the programme has emerged as an influential actor in international debates about forests and indigenous rights. It has also developed field programmes in a number of developing countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

The programme employs a multi-disciplinary team of 'experts' in land rights, environment and development and indigenous affairs with high level qualifications in social anthropology, human rights law, tropical forest ecology and environmental science. Added together, the team has several decades of direct experience of work with indigenous peoples and forests in all corners of the globe. For the past 15 years the organisation has acted as policy adviser to the International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests – the only intercontinental movement of indigenous peoples in the tropics.

The FPP has extensive and long-term field programmes in Venezuela, the three Guyanas (Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana), Central Africa, and South and South East Asia. The FPP also carries out and helps coordinate national and international advocacy focused on policy-making related to forests and human rights. It is unique among the NGOs active in these international fora in adopting a rights-based approach to environment and development issues. It has gained a reputation for adopting clear, accurately documented positions based on on-the-ground interaction with indigenous peoples and other forest-dwelling communities, as well as detailed bibliographic research.

³ Particularly the Centre for Environment and Development (www.cedcameroun.org), based in Yaounde, Cameroon.

⁴ Including Ba'aka and Baaka in CAR and Congo-Brazzaville

⁵ The term 'Pygmy' is sometimes used in a pejorative manner, which is not the intention here. In this paper the term is used as a general and widely-understood term to refer to the estimated 600,000 indigenous hunting and gathering people who dwell in the forested regions of Central Africa, and known locally by their own names, such as Baka, Bagyeli, Bakola Ba'Aka, Mbendelle, Baaka, Batwa, Cwa, Mbuti, etc., and often referred to by themselves as 'people of the forest'.

⁶ For a review of some of these impacts, see www.forestpeoples.org, including Nelson, J (2004) Conservation and Communities in Africa: The Need to Secure Indigenous Rights and Biodiversity. FPP Briefing for CEFDHAC Conference; Nelson and Hossack (eds) (2003) Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas in Africa: from principles to practice. Moreton-in-Marsh: Forest Peoples Programme; Barume, Albert Kwokwo (2000) Heading Towards Extinction? Indigenous Rights in Africa: The Case of the Twa of the Kahuzi-Biega National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo. IWGIA Document No. 101. Copenhagen: IWGIA, and Moreton-in Marsh: Forest Peoples Programme.

⁷ E.g. Lobéké National Park, managed by WWF.

⁸ IUCN- World Conservation Union/WCPA – World Commission on Protected Areas/ WWF – Worldwide Fund for Nature (2000) Principles and guideline on protected areas and indigenous/traditional peoples.

⁹ Such as Cameroon's 1994 Forest Law.

¹⁰ Such as Article 10(c) of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

- ¹¹ WWF (1994) WWF Statement of Principles: indigenous peoples and conservation. Gland: WWF International. WWF has recently renewed its commitment to these principles and produced detailed guidelines for enabling their implementation. See for example: www.worldwildlife.org/what/howehelp/community/partneringwith/item1355.html .
- ¹² www.worldwildlife.org/what/howehelp/community/partneringwith/item1355.html .
- ¹³ FPP's work with communities in Cameroon was first funded in 2000 by the UK Community Fund.
- ¹⁴ FPP has already identified a number of logging concessions in the TRIDOM landscape which are far behind in achieving these standards, so sharing these lessons of this project with logging companies will complement WWF's ongoing support for forest certification in Cameroon.
- ¹⁵ FPP (2001) The Kigali Conference: Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas: from principles to practice. November 2001.
- ¹⁶ E.g. Meetings between Bagyeli and Campo Ma'an Park Staff FPP first facilitated in 2001.
- ¹⁷ CED (2004) Carte Communautaire d'Utilisation des Ressources Forestieres de Reserve de Dja-Ouest (Mekas). Yaounde: CED.
- ¹⁸ CED (2003) Carte Communautaire d'Utilisation des Ressources Forestieres de PNCM-Nord. Yaounde: CED.
- ¹⁹ Such as the Bipindi Land Forum established by the Promo-Bagyeli project on which FPP, CED and Planet Survey collaborated between 2001 and 2007.
- ²⁰ For example for the Durban World Parks Congress that Bagyeli and Baka representatives from around Campo, Dja and Nki attended, with FPP support.
- ²¹ The Campo Ma'an National Park management plan now explicitly recognises Bagyeli rights to hunt and gather to secure their subsistence needs, even inside the park. This change was prompted by maps of traditional forest use that FPP and CED helped communities to create.
- ²² Recommendations by FPP to the Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB) in the northern Republic of Congo led to formal recognition by the logging company of Bangombe and Ba'aka usage and resident rights across all 1.3 million hectares of its five logging concessions adjoining Nouabale-Ndoki National Park. With FPP technical support CIB is helping indigenous communities map their forest use throughout this region.
- ²³ E.g. Bagyeli community fieldworkers and the microprojects component of Bipindi project.
- ²⁴ Through, for example, FPP's Africa Legal land Human Rights Programme.
- ²⁵ The Commission for Central African Forests (COMIFAC) is the main intergovernmental mechanism for forest and environment policy in Central Africa. See www.comifac.org.
- ²⁶ Nelson, J (April 14, 2005) Comments on Capitalising on the COMIFAC Convergence Plan, French Facilitation of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership 2005–7, and visits by Professor Wangari Maathai with key leaders and donors during 2005. Open letter to Professor Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize Winner and COMIFAC Ambassador.
- ²⁷ COMIFAC (2002) Plan de Convergence, Action Prioritaires 2003-2005. Declaration des Chef d'Etat de L'Afrique Central sur La Conservation et la Gestion Durable des Forets. COMIFAC : Yaoundé.
- ²⁸ See, for example, contributions by FPP to bulletins published by the World Rainforest Movement (www.wrm.org.uy).
- ²⁹ Etude des droits des peuples Baka et leurs connaissances locales en matière de conservation dans la Réserve du Dja en rapport avec la Convention sur la diversité biologique (forthcoming). Case study of Cameroon CBD Implementation for 8th Conference of Parties (COP 8). Brazil.
- ³⁰ From the CBD Programme of Work – Target for Goal 2.2: *'Full and effective participation by 2008, of indigenous and local communities, in full respect of their rights and recognition of their responsibilities,*

consistent with national law and applicable international obligations, and the participation of relevant stakeholders, in the management of existing, and the establishment of new, protected areas.'

³¹ Griffiths, T (2005) Indigenous Peoples and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF). Indigenous Peoples' experiences of GEF-funded Biodiversity Conservation – A critical study. FPP Briefing Paper. Moreton-in-Marsh: Forest Peoples Programme; Griffiths, T (2003) A failure of Accountability – Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights and Development Agency Standards: a reference tool and comparative review. Moreton-in-Marsh: FPP. Available in French, English and Spanish at www.forestpeoples.org.

³² Protecting Indigenous Rights in the Republic of Congo through the Application of FSC Standards in Forest Plans: A review of progress made by Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB) against FSC Principles 2 and 3 (2006) www.forestpeoples.org/documents/africa/bases/congo_brazz_base.shtml

³³ Such as the EU-supported project supporting Bayaka in the Dzanga Special Reserve, CAR.

³⁴ Ndameu, B (2001) Protected areas and indigenous peoples: the paradox of conservation and survival of the Baka in Moloundou Region (south-east Cameroon) IN: Nelson et al, op cit. www.forestpeoples.org/documents/conservation/bases/p_to_p_project_base.shtml#english .

³⁵ Owono, JC (2001) The extent of Bagyeli Pygmy involvement in the development and Management Plan of the Campo Ma'an UTO. IN: Nelson et al, op. cit. www.forestpeoples.org/documents/conservation/bases/p_to_p_project_base.shtml#english . Also see Nelson, J (ed) Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas: from principles to practice. Community Testimony from Cameroon.

³⁶ Nguiffo, S (2001) One forest and two dreams: the constraints imposed on the Baka in Miatta by the Dja Reserve. IN: Nelson et al, op.cit. www.forestpeoples.org/documents/conservation/bases/p_to_p_project_base.shtml#english .

³⁷ A secondary benefit of this process will be to contribute to efforts by logging companies to conform to FSC standards, by systematically testing and then promoting different mechanisms by which community rights can be protected in forest concession management plans in line with the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and FSC Principles 2 and 3. FPP has already identified a number of logging concessions in the TRIDOM landscape which are far behind in achieving these standards, so sharing these lessons of this project with logging companies will complement WWF's ongoing support for forest certification in Cameroon.

³⁸ All photos by John Nelson, john@forestpeoples.org .

³⁹ Complementary work by local partner CED is being funded by GTZ.

⁴⁰ WWF (2008) Mise en oeuvre du projet: 'Indigenous peoples' participation in mapping of traditional forest resources for sustainable livelihoods and great ape conservation'. Processus de choix des sites du travail : densité de grands primates dans trois zones à explorer. Mimeo.

⁴¹ This map was produced by CED using data from all five Baka settlements, collected with logistical and technical support by CEFAID and FPP.

⁴² A film of their presentations on July 1, 2008 is available.

⁴³ Mambele, June 2008.



**Forest Peoples
Programme**

1c Fosseway Business Centre, Stratford Road,
Moreton-in-Marsh GL59 9NQ, England
tel: +44 (0)1608 652893 fax: +44 (0)1608 652878
info@forestpeoples.org www.forestpeoples.org

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Reg. No. 3868836, registered address as above. UK-registered Charity No. 1082158.
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