Welcome to the 10th Issue of Our Newsletter

In this January—March 2017 Issue of Conservation Echoes, we bring you exciting and important stories on our efforts in biodiversity conservation and development in the South West Region of Cameroon. Particularly, as we wrap up activities for PSMNR-SWR Phase III, we are keen on executing plans made for the 2017 planning workshop.

Find out how: Mount Cameroon National Park manages waste especially after the annual Mount Cameroon Race of Hope; why Kumba may loose its majestic crater lake and much more.

A big thanks to all our contributors, especially from our protected areas; please keep those stories coming in.

For more information on our activities, visit our website: www.psmnr-sw.org

Enjoy!
Lisette Moka Ndolo,
PSMNR-SWR Communications Officer

PSMNR-SWR Steering Committee Approves 2017 Workplan and Budgets

Early this year, the statutory members of the PSMNR-SWR Steering committee met in Kribi under the auspices of the Secretary General of MINFOF, Mr Nyongwen Joseph, representing the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, his excellency Ngole Philip Ngwese.

During this session, steering committee members unanimously validated PSMNR-SWR activity, financial and audit reports for 2016 as well as the annual workplan and budgets from January to September 2017. The Committee recommended that PSMNR-SWR should follow up the submission of proposals for the creation of two National Biosphere Reserves -the Cross River Gorilla Takamanda Biosphere Reserve and Korup Rainforest Biosphere Reserve.

With regards to the wrap up of the current phase of PSMNR-SWR, the committee recommended that PSMNR-SWR should concert with partners to look for measures to address the probable gap period between October 2017 till the start of PSMNR-SWR Phase IV. The committee also advised that negotiations for PSMNR-SWR Phase IV should begin early enough and the Division for Cooperation (DCP) at the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife should liaise with MINEPAT and KFW to anticipate any delays in the fund attribution process.

The steering committee members equally recommended that within the framework of PSMNR-SWR Phase IV, lasting solutions be sought at national level to address human wildlife conflicts.
Dear Partners and Colleagues,

The current trend of Human Wildlife Conflicts in the South West Region is a cause for concern. Recently, the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife reacted promptly to this issue and ordered the administrative killing of an elephant around Boman, a village in the peripheral of the Mount Cameroon National Park. This elephant had become a menace to the surrounding populations and particularly destroyed their crops.

The situation is not very different in and around other protected areas in the region as we have also received reports of elephant destruction of crops in Ntali – around Banyang-Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary, Ebie in Mount Cameroon National Park; as well as damages caused by buffalos in Erat village (Korup National Park).

Indeed, we are all very concerned and conscious that human-wildlife conflicts are either caused by, or a consequence of, the uncontrolled expansion of human population and livelihood strategies. The coexistence of humans and wildlife in the same environment and particularly in the protected areas, is an increasing challenge in the region.

The Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife’s “scarring mission” – a tactic to send animals back into protected areas is highly appreciated but largely insufficient; whereas “Battue Administrative” – administrative killing of wild animals, is not a solution as it pushes already declining species towards local and global extinction. Yet, local farmers want compensation for crops damaged.

However, MINFOF together with its conservation and development partners are still looking for a comfortable solution to this dilemma. And while our experts are at work, we advise our local communities to stop opening farms within known wildlife corridors.

MCNP Launches 2017 Plantain Season in 19 villages

Within the context of the co-management of the Mount Cameroon National Park (MCNP), the MCNP Service together with some 19 communities recently launched the third phase of plantain farming season for 2017.

The plantain project is one of the income-generating activities promoted by MCNP within some of its communities with the goal of improving the livelihood of community members. Specifically, the plantain project aims at increasing production while maintaining a sustainable ecological balance and in keeping with the overall PSMNR-SWR conservation objective.

The main objective of the project is to transfer and promote improved plantain production technologies to enhance productivity and profitability of plantain production in targeted villages around MCNP.

The 2017 launch of the plantain activities saw the active participation of 19 communities with over 171 farmers involved; among who were 36 women. A total of 1964 plantain suckers of different varieties were sown in varied propagation structures.

The Park Service hopes that the mobilized farmers will work in synergy to ensure the availability of plantain suckers at all times in their respective communities and ultimately high yields.
Stakeholders Take Giant Steps for the Conservation of KNP

Giant steps towards the conservation of Korup National Park (KNP) were literally taken in Ndian Division during the divisional validation of its management plan, which is under revision, and envisaged to run from 2017-2021. Preceding several local consultations and sub divisional validation meetings, this milestone event was presided at by the then SDO of Ndian Division, Mr. NTOU’OU NDONG Chamberlin.

Since its creation in 1986, KNP continues to face challenges due to human pressure on the park resources. Local communities particularly in and around the park rely on its resources to satisfy their basic needs; hence, their activities such as hunting, encroachment, unsustainable collection of NTPFs and water poisoning negatively affect the park.

Given the national and international significance of KNP in terms of biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and socio-economic development, the stakeholders of KNP are determined to reverse the paradigm and work towards a positive change for the mutual benefit of the park and the surrounding communities. It was against this backdrop that on the 14th of February 2017, the management of KNP together with stakeholders including the administration of Ndian, Regional Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife, conservation and development partners as well as a senator, parliamentarian, elites and representatives from concerned local communities took giant steps in support of the management objective and vision of KNP, which were respectively presented as follows:

- To secure its integrity, protect its biodiversity and contribute to socio-economic development at local, regional, national and sub-regional levels through the full involvement of all stakeholders, and

- By 2035, the Korup National Park maintains its integrity, supports thriving wildlife populations and fulfills its ecosystem functions and services, while communities and other stakeholders optimize and equitably share benefits from collaborative park management.

KNP is reputed for being one of the oldest and most diverse rainforests in Africa. Consequently, managing the park’s biodiversity is of great priority to its stakeholders, who are working within the framework of collaborative management approach to ensure the realization of the objective and vision of KNP.

Mainstreaming Do-No-Harm Concept within PSMNR-SWR

The staff of Korup, Takamanda and Mt. Cameroon National Park as well as the Ban-yang-Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary in early February participated in a training session on the concept of Do-No-Harm in the context of natural resource management.

The aim of the training which was done by Mme Remmert-Fontes, an international consultant, was to sensitize the staff and present them tools for conflict sensitive project planning, taking into consideration the possibility of unexpected impacts of PSMNR-SWR interventions and the need for thorough risk analyses.

Since the inception of PSMNR-SWR, a variety of interventions have been introduced within the context of the co-management of protected areas. This has established and strengthened park staff’s collaboration with local communities. While the park staff are often experienced in project management, their relationship with target groups is not without challenges; thus requiring that interventions are properly planned, communicated and monitored.

To support this process, the Do-No-Harm training which took place in Edea provided regional MINFOF staff, conservators and staff from protected areas some helpful tools. The Do-No-Harm concept was presented and practical examples discussed. The participants also carried out exercises to test their understanding of methods for conflict sensitive project planning.

One important lesson derived from the training was the fact that despite the experience gained throughout the years, the importance of re-adjusting interventions based on proper evaluation and analysis of the context is often underestimated. Consequently, the need for regular application of tools such as stakeholder mapping was emphasized to check the validity of the assumptions which are used to direct interventions or if new issues / conditions should be considered.

Clement Toh
WWF Protected Area Technical Advisor, KNP

Julia Guenzel
GIZ TA for Co-Management
Interview: Dr Julien Dupuy Explains Key Facts on the Creation of Biosphere Reserves in Cameroon and Nigeria

Within the framework of PSMNR-SWR, the South West Regional Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife is currently carrying out local consultations on the creation of national and trans-boundary Biosphere Reserves within Korup and Takamanda National Parks and Cross River National Park - Nigeria.

In this edition of Conservation Echoes (CE), Dr Julien Dupuy (JD), PSMNR-SWR Forest and Wildlife Expert offers some clarifications on the process which the two countries have been engaged in since 2015 to strengthen their collaboration on trans-boundary conservation and sustainable development.

CE: Dr Dupuy, thank you for taking time to explain to us the key things we need to know about the upcoming creation of Biosphere Reserves in Cameroon and Nigeria.

JD: You are welcome.

CE: What is a Biosphere Reserve and how is it different from a National Park?

JD: A biosphere reserve represents an official international recognition by UNESCO of the environmental and cultural value of a specific area. It is not replacing a National Park but is complementary to it. It intends to integrate the Park in a broader scale development and conservation strategy.

CE: Why is it important to create a National Biosphere Reserve in Korup and Takamanda National Parks?

JD: Creating a biosphere reserve in Korup and Takamanda National Parks will compliment current park management measures and certainly contribute to mobilize additional funds. It represents an opportunity to enhance PSMNR-SWR intervention since it intends to protect core conservation areas and connected landscapes with for example livelihood improvement measures at the Parks’ peripheries and along major wildlife corridors. The two biosphere reserves will also complement Technical Operation Units’ interventions as it requires multi stakeholder platforms to address land use conflicts around protected areas.

CE: What is the advantage of creating a trans-boundary Biosphere Reserve which includes Korup and Takamanda National Parks from Cameroon and Cross River National Park from Nigeria?

JD: It is nearly impossible to manage Korup and Takamanda National Parks without a close collaboration with the administration and people of the Cross River State in Nigeria. On both side of the border communities are highly dependent on forest resources, found in the last refuges for critically endangered species such as the Cross River Gorilla, the Drill or Red Colobus Monkeys. Wildlife does not respect territorial boundaries and so do poachers who are taking advantage of porous boundaries and strong socio-cultural linkages. Biosphere Reserve process represents an opportunity to turn this situation into an advantage with the harmonization of conservation strategy and by creating synergies across the border with the sustainable exploitation and trade of forest products, together with the promotion of cultural identity, tourism and exchange programs.

CE: What does it take to create both National and Trans-boundary Biosphere Reserves?

JD: The process leading towards the official designation of a trans-boundary biosphere reserve by UNESCO has been engaged with several trans-boundary meetings since 2015 and implies further intense consultation of major stakeholders at local level. It is a long process which involves the signing of an official agreement between governmental authorities, the submission of both Nationals and Trans-boundary nominations forms for evaluation before the official designation by UNESCO.

CE: Thank you Dr Dupuy.

JD: You are welcome.

KNP: Road and Water Management Committees set for Task

Members of the Road and Water Management committees of the Korup National Park have been empowered with road and water management skills in a three-day workshop which was held in Manyemen, Babi village and Ikondo kondo 1. The workshop was guided by PSMNR’s objective of ensuring the sustainable management of all infrastructural projects realized in partnership with local communities.

The water management committee members from Bakut/Ekogate, Ipongi, Bombangi and Basu localities met in Manyemen for the training on water management. Likewise, water management committee members of Ikondo Kondo 1, Erat, Apasang communities and VFMCs had their training in Ikondo Kondo 1. The road management committee for the Babi Esukutan motor-bike road was also schooled on road management techniques in Babi.

The trainings covered various topics with both the theoretical and practical sessions comprising questions and answers, group work, presentations and field work to identify potential problems and solution.

At the end of the workshops, trainees could identify problem areas on the road, water supply and the tools needed at community level for maintenance. The active participation of the trainees was highly satisfactory as observed by the trainers and the KNP representatives.
PSMNR-SWR Boosts Local Development through Conservation Incentives

Some 91 local communities in and around Korup, Takamanda and Mount Cameroon National Parks have benefited approximately 42,326,604 FCFA as conservation incentives for their active participation in conservation activities between 2013 - 2015 in the three National Parks supported by PSMNR-SWR.

In the context of co-management of protected areas, National Park Services together with adjacent communities have been working for the past three years to ensure the protection of these national parks for the benefit of all.

As partners in the management of protected areas, local communities are rewarded for their contribution in the protection of national parks through an incentive scheme put in place by PSMNR-SWR. One of the scheme is Conservation Bonus, a performance based amount paid annually to communities for their active participation in the co-management of national parks. A total of 27,532,625 FCFA conservation bonus have been paid to over 91 communities with 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Similarly, Conservation Credits (CCs), another incentive that is generated through the participation of villagers in paid Collaborative Management Activities (CMAs) has also been awarded for the past three years. Individuals have been paid about 75,000,000 FCFA for their participation in CMAs while their villages have earned about 15 million FCFA conservation credits.

According to assessments done by the park stakeholders and the general public, conservation incentives cannot be over-estimated. The incentives are continually paid to conserve and protect the national parks.

The conservation incentives supported by the South West Region Development Program (SORDP) have further taken into consideration lessons learnt. These incentives as well as Conservation Credits (CCs), are generated through the implementation of Collaborative Management Activities (CMAs) to appreciate the active participation of the communities.

Leaving Nothing but your Footprints in Mount Cameroon National Park

Mount Cameroon National Park (MCNP) is noted for its unique greenery ranging from great variety of fauna and flora species to an amazing endemic species and geographical landscape. Located in the vicinity of the legendary hospitable town of Buea, it covers a total surface area of 58,178ha and bordered by 41 local communities.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), MCNP is the most diverse ecosystem in Cameroon and is rated as the 10th most conservable places in the world. This protection status is however threatened by a number of guides, porters, tourists and visitors who sometimes do not appropriately dispose of their waste such as used tissues, non-biodegradable plastics and containers and sardine cans.

Since its creation in 2009, MCNP Service has relentlessly ensured the proper management of waste within the park. Through its “Keep MCNP Clean” exercise implemented at least thrice a year, the park staff together with 13 tour organizations, community members and other volunteers converged at different spots within the park to collect waste. This exercise is characterized by sweeping of park trails, campsites, rest houses as well as general hand-picking of non-natural materials. All waste gathered from the cleanup is brought out of the Park to be eventually disposed of by a waste management company.

During the March 2017 cleanup exercise, some participants confided in the Conservation Echoes that, tourist and visitors to MCNP should avoid littering the park because “Cleanliness is next to godliness”.

Despite all efforts to keep MCNP clean and natural, one could still spot patches of waste materials littered within the park. It is against this back-drop that the park conservator, Mr. Besong Simon during a 6-day visit to tour organizations emphasized the need for guides and porters to properly orientate tourists or visitors hiking the mountain. “Waste produced during each visit should immediately be brought down by porters and guides” he added. He equally encouraged managers of tour organizations to take impromptu visits to the park in a bid to catch up with porters and guides defaulting this rule and in effect sanction them accordingly.

To brand MCNP as a first-class touristic destination, adequate sanitation cannot be over-emphasized, indicating the need for collective efforts of park stakeholders and the general public.

Therefore, when you visit MCNP leave nothing but your footprints.

Susan Ndip and Margaret Bessem, Communication Volunteers at MCNP
“The Limited Access Zone within KNP allows local communities to perform their user rights such as the collection of Non-Timber Forest Products and carrying out traditional rites”

**Updates on the Revision Process of the Management Plan of Korup National Park**

The Management of Korup National Park together with divisional administrators of Ndi-an, Kupe Manenguba and Manyu Divisions and representatives of concerned local communities have validated at the divisional level the park’s revised management plan. The validation meetings were held early February 2017 in Mundemba and Mamfe respectively wherein stakeholders were presented the objectives, vision, zoning plans, management programmes and activities of the management plan. They were equally presented the zoning plans for the creation of two biosphere reserves - Cross River Takamanda and Korup Rainforest Biosphere Reserves.

Following technical presentations, stakeholders raised concerns on development support to be gained from collaboration with Park management. Particularly, local communities were keen on clarifying their user rights. PSMNR-SWR experts reiterated the value of zoning KNP which through the Limited Access Zone allows local communities to perform their user rights such as the collection of non-timber forest products and carrying out traditional rites.

Similarly, stakeholders were informed that the Park will embark on a sensitization campaign to raise awareness on the zoning of KNP. Communities were also assured of the possibility for the Park’s management to diversify alternative income generating activities promoted within communities.

Meanwhile representatives of concerned local communities took turns to express their views on the collaboration between the Park Management and their communities within the context of the previous management plan.

“Right now, hunting within Esukutan has reduced drastically as people are concentrated on farming cocoa and cassava. We have been able to benefit a motor-bike road, cocoa nursery and other farm inputs. The most important of these is the road as we can now evacuate our cocoa and garri. Additionally, two students from my village benefited from a scholarship offered by PSMNR-SWR through KNP”

“I have been trained as a Community Based Trainer for Cocoa Farmer Field School. Now I train others within Cluster A. Before we had little knowledge on the growing of cocoa. We couldn’t manage our farms, but today our farmers can identify any common problem in their farms. So, we are very happy with the support we have received from the Programme through Korup National Park”

“We have learnt a lot from the meetings organised by KNP, where we have been educated on how to protect our natural resources and improve our standard of living through income generating activities such as organised marketing of bush mango. However, I would like to advice the Park Management to create a road at the park borders so that we can be able to pursue trespassers”
Kumba May Lose its Main Source of Potable Water and Majestic Barombi Mbo Crater Lake

Stakeholders of the Lake Barombi Mbo Forest Reserve (LMBFR) were recently informed that though LBMFR is the main source of potable water for Kumba municipality, 90% of the forest reserve has been destroyed by illegal activities such as farming/large scale agriculture, logging and overfishing in the Lake Barombi.

This information was disclosed to LBMFR stakeholders during a local consultation meeting organised by PSMNR-SWR on the 22nd of February 2017 at the Kumba City Council Hall. The meeting was chaired by the Divisional Officer for Kumba I and attended by participants from the Regional Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife (RDOFO-SW) and Kumba I Council, as well as traditional authorities and inhabitants of some local communities from LBMFR area.

The meeting had as objectives to restitute the findings from the farm encroachment and boundary demarcation surveys carried out in LBMFR; present and validate maps showing the current boundaries of LBMFR and its land use patterns; and present and validated the management objectives, vision, programmes and activities of LBMFR.

Experts from PSMNR-SWR and the South West Regional Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife presented the actual situation of LBMFR including maps of land ownership, land use patterns and eco-tourism infrastructures within the Forest Reserve. It was equally revealed that about 75% of the reserve has been encroached.

Given the dreadful state of LBMFR – main source of potable water supply for the inhabitants of Kumba, the workshop participants unanimously acknowledged the need for drastic measures to be taken to protect and in the long run reverse the impact of human activities within the reserve.

Thus, the management vision coined by participants indicates that by 2035, LMBFR is fully regenerated through collaborative management activities that promote ecotourism.

The workshop wrapped up with a call from the Divisional Officer of Kumba I for concerned stakeholders particularly local communities to act as true partners for surveillance and protection of the forest reserve.

It is worth noting that LBMFR was created for the protection of the lake Barombi which is home to endemic fish species. In 2013, the Government of Cameroon within the context of decentralization handed over the management of LBMFR to the Kumba I council. For the past three years, the RDOFO-SW though PSMNR-SWR has provided financial and technical support for the realization of socio economic survey, environmental impact assessment, regeneration and management inventory with the aim of elaborating a management plan for LBMFR.

“Truly the Government is spending a lot of money in the FR, particularly this year, the government has allocated 13.5 million for its management.

If we plant trees and they are protected, then we won’t have problems. The Government through regeneration has allowed people to continue their farming activities within the FR with the hope that they will carter for the young trees being planted”

Oscar Ndoh, Chief of Kake

“With the current situation of the reserve and from what I have heard from this meeting today, please it is time for us to truly protect the reserve. The benefit we get from the lake, water, fishing just to name a few. I have lived here long enough to know the importance of that lake. We used to go swimming and do other fun activities. So if we do not protect the reserve, I wonder if my grandchildren will live well in Kumba”

Prince Ndoki Mukete, Njuki

“All is not lost yet. All it requires is a determined approach. I am optimistic that the status of the reserve can change for the better. With further education, the original size of the reserve can be reclaimed. Personally, should Kumba I Council seek my support, I would work and dedicate my services because the survival of the Lake Barombi is the survival of the future generation of Kumba”

Ebako Albert, Mayor Kumba I Council
The Programme for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the South West Region (PSMNR-SWR) is a development Programme of the Republic of Cameroon co-financed by the Federal Republic of Germany through KFW, in collaboration with German International Cooperation (GIZ), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and is supported by the consulting firm GFA/DFS.

Purpose of PSMNR-SWR
PSMNR-SWR aims to promote sustainable forest and wildlife resource management by affected stakeholders for their own benefit.

Objective of PSMNR-SWR
The objective of PSMNR-SWR is to contribute towards the preservation of high-value ecosystems in the South West Region thereby contributing to improved livelihoods of the surrounding communities in a sustainable manner.

Management Approaches
• Collaborative management approach
• Landscape management approach

Core Intervention Areas
• Management of Protected Areas
• Sustainable forest management
• Mitigation of land-use conflicts

About PSMNR-SWR

Animal of the Quarter: Preuss’s Monkey

Preuss’s monkey (Cercopithecus preussi), also known as Preuss’s guenon, is a primate that lives in the mountainous (up to 2500 m) forests of eastern Nigeria, western Cameroon and Bioko in Equatorial Guinea.

The diet of Preuss’s monkey is primarily fruits, leaves and insects, although the species occasionally raids human crops. It is darkish in coloration with a white chin; and adult males have a blue scrotum. Preuss’s monkeys weigh up to 10 kg. Troops consist of one adult male and several females and adolescents, averaging 17 total per troop. Females give birth to a single offspring about once every three years. The young mature at 4 years and lives for an average of 31 years.

According to the International Union for Nature Conservation (IUNC) Red List, Preuss’s monkey is an endangered species that is likely to become extinct; this is due to habitat loss and hunting.

Within the South West region of Cameroon, Preuss’s monkeys were recently caught on Camera trap placed in the Mount Cameroon National Park.

Yango Hannah: PSMNR-SWR Chimpanzee Conservation Scholarship (CHICS) Beneficiary

Yango Hannah hails from Esukutan- an in-park village of Korup National Park. In 2016, Hannah was selected as one of the beneficiaries of the PSMNR-SWR Chimpanzee Conservation Scholarship (CHICS); which has as goal to increase literacy and build capacity of future resource users while increasing awareness on conservation issues.

Hannah is now a form one student at Government High School Mundemba. She lives in Mundemba in a shared apartment with 9 other CHICS beneficiaries (five boys and 4 girls). This apartment is managed by Korup Rainforest Conservation Society (KRCS), a local NGO that PSMNR-SWR has signed a Memorandum of understanding with to implement CHICS.

Hannah on a typical day follows the timetable of the KRCS managed home; which often begins at 6am. Hannah gets up at 6 am and performs her house chores which include making up her bed; sweeping and mopping of the living room and veranda floors and washing of dishes. After her chores, Hannah bathes, eats breakfast and goes to school. After school, she returns home at 3pm; where she takes a nap, baths, dine with housemates, study and finally retires for the evening at 9pm.

“I am very excited with my studies and I would like to become a nurse. My village – Esukutan has no hospital nor trained medical personnel. If I become a nurse, I will be of great service to my family and community”

As a CHICS beneficiary, Hannah Says No to the hunting and killing of animals in and around Korup National Park. “I would like to see any defaulter of wildlife laws face justice”.

Hannah is the first daughter of Agbor Eyan-go and Asek Emerencia, she has four siblings; two boys and two girls.