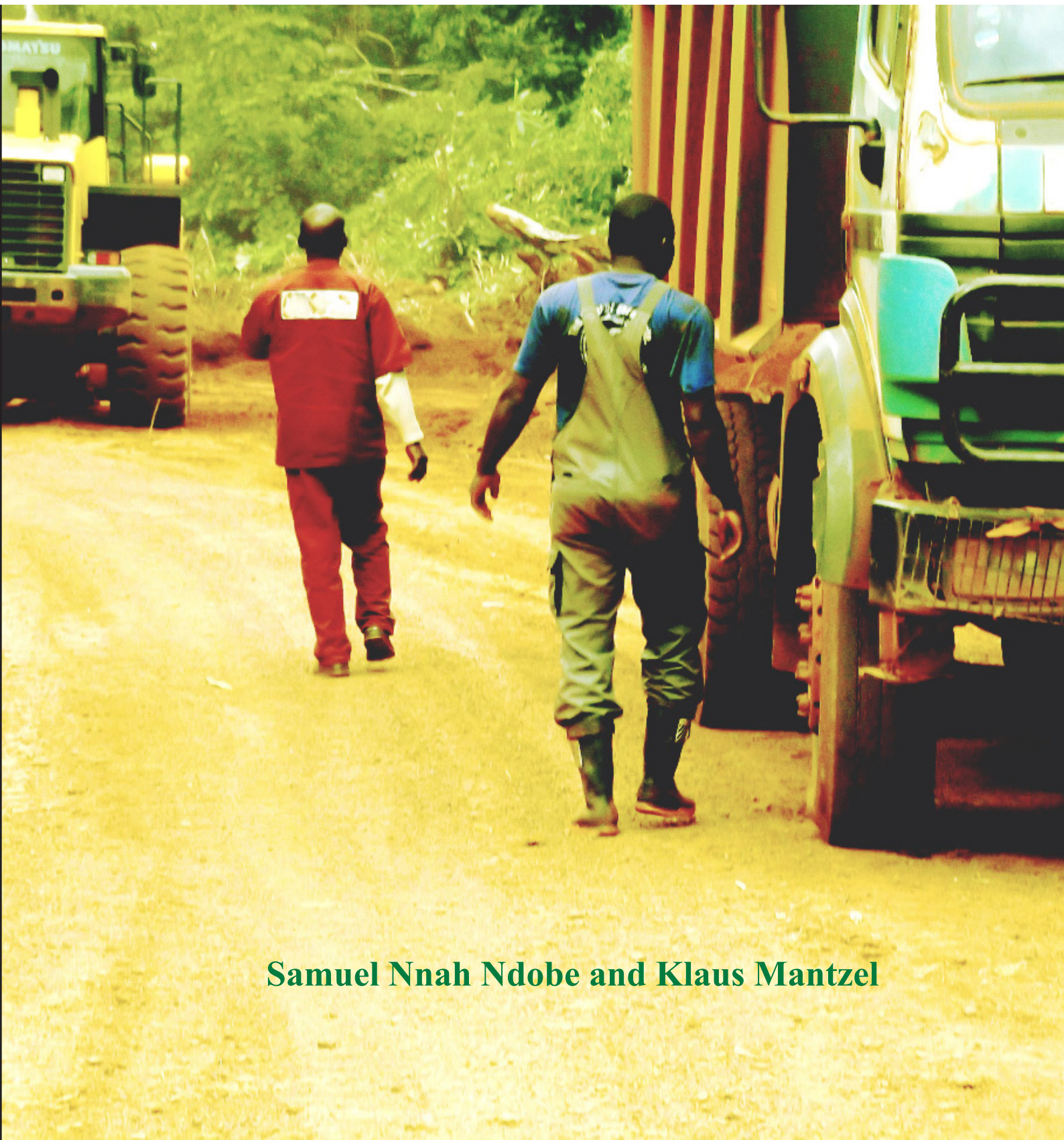




**Deforestation, REDD and
Takamanda National Park
in Cameroon – a Case Study**



Samuel Nnah Ndobe and Klaus Mantzel

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1 Introduction

As far as development cooperation with Cameroon is concerned, Germany is the second largest bilateral donor country after France. Its financial commitments for 2012-2013 totalled €77 million (€40 million for financial cooperation and €37 million as technical support). Its major agencies are the GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit – German Society for international cooperation) and the KfW Development Bank. Their support programmes concentrate on three objectives: (1) health care (with HIV/AIDS control as priority), (2) decentralisation/participative development/good governance and (3) the sustainable use of natural resources.¹

From the German point of view, the latter objective meets the need to protect rainforests as key elements in the conservation of biodiversity and climate change mitigation. Both of these aims are claimed to be cornerstones of German development cooperation.² As will be examined in chapter 4, Germany's role in, what is described as, the sustainable management of Cameroon's forests is an important one; it must be seen as an integral part of the UN- and Forest Carbon Partnership's REDD initiatives in Cameroon, even more so, because GIZ and KfW subscribe to and actively support the participative approach of the REDD concept and its guidelines.

The following case study provides (1) a literature based overview of Cameroon's forest protection measures and the linked REDD-Readiness process, specifically in regards to the integration of forest dependent communities, as well as (2) a report on a concrete example of the implementation of the participative elements of this process in the context of a protected forest area, namely the Takamanda National Park.

1.1 Cameroon and its forests

Cameroon is situated north of the equator, linking West Africa to Central Africa. It has a coastline on the Gulf of Guinea and common borders with Nigeria in the west, the Chad in the north and northeast, the Central African Republic in the east and the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon in the south. The country shares with its eastern and southern neighbours one of the richest forest areas in the world, home to a vast number of endemic plant and animal species. The Congo Basin forest is the second largest tropical forest in the world, 11% of it on Cameroonian soil. About 40% (19,6 million ha) of the country's surface of 415,442 km² is covered with tropical forest, mainly humid dense evergreen forest and partly humid dense deciduous forest, gallery forest, swamp and mangrove forest.³ Further away from the equator, as the average rainfall diminishes, the vegetation changes to dry forest and finally to open savanna and grassland in the northern half of the country.

Cameroon's forests probably support the richest flora and fauna in continental tropical Africa with high levels of endemism, making it one of the world's biodiversity hotspots; it ranks fifth in Africa for biodiversity and the country is home to nearly 8,000 species of plants, 250 mammals, 542 fish, 848 birds, 330 reptiles, and 200 amphibians.

This rich biodiversity is confronted by one of the highest deforestation rates in the Congo Basin. The FAO figures from 2005 to 2010 show a loss of around 200,000 ha per year, which corresponds to about 1% of the forest cover. Between 1990 and 2010, Cameroon lost an average of 220,000 ha per year. In total, between 1990 and 2010, Cameroon lost 18.1% of its forest cover or around 4,400,000 ha.⁴

However, estimating the rate of deforestation and forest degradation in Cameroon is complicated due to the diversity of the agro-ecological zones. Some situate Cameroon's net deforestation rate at 0.14 % and the degradation rate at 0.01% (for a period running from 1990 to 2000). Reliable data can only be provided by further studies, ones which take into consideration the specific regional characteristics of the different agro-ecological zones⁵, including the differing intensity of exploitation.

1.2 The causes of deforestation and forest degradation

The main drivers of deforestation in Cameroon are forest conversion for agriculture (which account for 80 percent of forest cover loss) followed by fuel wood harvesting and illegal logging. With increasing intensity, logging activities are opening up access to the country's remaining intact primary forests. Less than 20 percent of Cameroon's forest outside protected areas remain free from past or planned logging activity.⁶

The **shifting cultivation method of subsistence farming** is most often cited as the prime cause of this deforestation. While at first sight this seems obvious, since close to 80% of rural households in Cameroon practice it, this explanation does not take into account the temporary character of this vegetation loss nor the practice of fallowing, a fact that needs to be considered in future carbon accounting.⁷ For while burning the forest to clear it for whatever purpose will contribute to carbon dioxide emissions, there is a huge difference between a practice of shifting cultivation which can recapture carbon as areas are left fallow, and more intensive industrial agricultural practices which can destroy rainforest for good and thereby destroy the biodiversity and sustainability of resources on which forest communities depend.

Traditional cash crop farming such as cacao and coffee cultivation in forest zones can contribute significantly to deforestation and degradation. These small scale farms currently occupy 914,609 ha in the country, and are primarily located in the forest regions (MINEP and FAO 2007).

Over the last few years, **agro-industrial plantations** have increasingly played a growing part in forest conversion, essentially in the central, southwestern and coastal regions.⁸ In 2008, oil palm crops alone occupied 136,180 ha in formerly forested land and demands for larger areas for palm groves continue at present, putting real pressure on the forests. One recent example is in the Nguti Sub-Division, South West Region, where Herakles Farms (SGSOC) is currently opening the first 2500 ha plantation block under dubious conditions.⁹

Another factor contributing to forest degradation is the use of **wood for energy**, which remains the most common form of energy in Cameroon, not only in rural but also in urban areas. Around 9.8 million cubic meters of fuel wood are collected annually, according to an FAO estimate (2009) and more than 76% of this fuel wood is collected in forest zones (Topa et al., 2010).¹⁰

Logging has increasingly been pointed out as a major source of forest degradation, whether this involves small traditional operations (legal or illegal) or large forest concessions (the UFA):

“Of the 3 million cubic meters of wood logged annually, 25 to 30% is removed illegally to supply the domestic market (Topa et al., 2010). The losses of forest area caused by logging stem mostly from the opening of skid trails (development of the road infrastructure), the creation of timber yards, site facilities and even migrations. Migrations represent an additional pressure on forest resources: to provide for their needs, the migrants develop farming in the forest zones and practice poaching.”¹¹

The independent monitoring of logging, done by NGOs like Resource Extraction Monitoring (REM, an international NGO), is weakened by the lack of enforcement of existing cutting limitations and inefficient fining of breaches.¹² For households, **bush meat** is the forest resource

that generates the greatest economic return. It is both a crucial food and income source for local households, but is also a major extractive business conducted by outsiders who – unlike local households - have no interest in maintaining the sustainability of resources in a particular area.

Livestock farming also accounts for some of the deforestation and degradation, mainly due to **bush fires** to renew pasture vegetation. Pastoral lands cover 30% of the national territory, but reliable figures on pasture expansion in forested areas are not available.¹³ The impact of **mining operations** on forests is two-fold: locally, open-pit mining is a direct source of deforestation; more widely, these mining operations are accompanied by the construction of service routes (roads, railroads) in order to export the minerals and to transport labor force. The construction of these service routes is an additional cause of deforestation. Migrant workers and their families develop subsistence farming activities that lead to further harmful impacts on the forest and its biodiversity.¹⁴

Infrastructure development has also been identified as a major source of forest degradation. Apart from the destruction of the vegetation cover by the road and rail construction itself, the corridors in the forests open the door to degradation along the routes. It is feared that the future extension of this infrastructural network will increase the pressure on forests.¹⁵



Sign at the edge of the Takamanda National Park
© Samuel Nnah Ndobe

2 Indigenous Peoples and Tribal Groups

More than 250 different ethnic groups and sub-groups live in Cameroon, classified in five major regional-cultural groups.¹⁶

Largest of these with about 38 per cent of the population are the Western Highlanders (Bamiléké, Bamoun, etc.). Southern tropical forest peoples make up 18 per cent of the population and include the Ewondo, Bulu and Fang, all of which are in the Beti cluster of peoples, as well as nomadic forest peoples, historically referred to as ‘Pygmies’. Kirdi is a collective name for several non-Muslim peoples in the north who make up around 18 per cent of the total population. Islamic peoples of the northern Sahel make up around 14 per cent of the population, these include the Peulh. Coastal tropical forest peoples make up around 12 per cent of the population and include the Bassa, Douala and smaller groups of the south-west.

Overlaying Cameroon’s rich ethnic diversity is a split between Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon, a legacy of the country’s divided colonial history. Both English and French are official languages. Indigenous peoples in the strict sense are those groups who identify themselves as “autochthones”, namely the Mbororos, the communities living in the Mandara Mountains and the hunter gatherer and ex-hunter gatherer forest peoples. The hunter gatherers are subdivided into three groups:

- The largest are the Baka, numbering about 40,000 persons in an area of 75,000 km² in the southwestern part of the country.
- The Bagyeli/Bokola are the second largest group of about 3,700 and live close to the coast in an area of around 12,000 km². (Some of the Baka and Bagyeli are able to still move between harvesting forest resources and exchange at the roadside, but many have been largely excluded from their forest resource and live in extreme marginalisation at the roadside.)
- The smallest of the three populations is of the Bedzang living in the forests in the northwest of Mbam (Ngambe-Tikar) in the Central Region.

All three add up to 0.4% of the total of Cameroon’s population.¹⁷

Traditionally they are hunters-gatherers, but they are under extreme pressure because of the various forms of pressure exerted on their forest and on their rights to access and use the forest.

Agriculture is becoming a more and more important activity. An investigation conducted by

Loung from 1983 to 1991 shows that there are probably four major categories of forest peoples occupations for these populations today:

- traditional hunter-gatherers (6%);
- hunters-gatherers-farmers (38%);
- farmers-hunters-gatherers (35%); and
- farmers-hunters (21%).

Gradual adoption of agriculture is part of a strategy to fight for survival. The forest remains, however, the major provider of the resources needed for subsistence and the irreplaceable frame of reference for their cultural identity. The modified lifestyles are accompanied by social changes, e.g. growing dependence of women on men. “Traditional hunters-gatherers are victims of the depletion of forest resources as a result of the exploitation, to which these resources are subjected, and the restriction or ignorance of their right of access to resources or their cultural identity.”¹⁸

Until recently, even the notion of respecting the specific needs and cultural characteristics of the indigenous peoples was totally absent in government policies, the judicial system or underlying laws. The denial of access to education, customary land rights, fair treatment in court cases, recognition as communities, etc. are often due to the fact that basic laws do not take into account their cultural differences or are incompatible with them. Autochthones are often even refused personal identity papers, essential to participation in almost all spheres of civic life.

Since 2000 the state has made some attempt to incorporate indigenous peoples’ rights in its framework. For example, to meet World Bank Operational Policies on indigenous peoples the Pygmy Peoples Development Plan (PPDP) was established as part of the FESP (see chapter 3.1 on national forest policy) “to facilitate the Pygmies’ access to community forests and to ensure fair distribution of the Annual Forest Fee (AFF) and the Wildlife Tax”.¹⁹

This was formerly denied, because “Pygmies” could not show up with the required “traditional chief of the community” to be able to take their share. In a similar way a report of the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Territorial Development (MINEPAT) argued, that “Pygmies” could not participate in PNDP (National Programme for Participatory Development), as their camps were not considered communities in the legal sense and the groups could therefore not legally interact with government services, unless “special measures” were found.²⁰

The participation of Cameroon in any form of REDD-scheme makes it necessary for its administration to comply with the acknowledgement of indigenous peoples rights, especially since Cameroon is a signatory state to a number of international declarations, that explicitly

recognise indigenous peoples' rights.²¹

The revision of all national laws, regulations, and relevant programmes to incorporate these rights is under way. Whether the attitude towards indigenous peoples “out in the field” changes at the same rate as such documents is yet to be ascertained.

The relation between Indigenous Forest Peoples/“autochthones” and their “Bantu”neighbours is often also characterised by ignorance or lack of acknowledgement of equal rights. Conflict over land issues, for example, can arise from the different land use patterns and concepts of ownership: the regular use of forest areas by forest peoples and the practice of fallow agriculture by sedentary farmer communities can lead to conflicting land claims.²²



Cross section of Obonyi II community during a community meeting © Samuel Nnah Ndobe

But this should not hide the fact that non-indigenous forest users are also discriminated against by the administration and often do not have the rights or the power to determine their future development either. Especially in the context of the management of Cameroon's forests it is important to note, that, apart from indigenous peoples, a great number of communities have lived in and from the forests for centuries and have forged their cultural identity accordingly. It should be pointed out, that

“The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination protects the rights of ‘ethnic groups’, including their rights to own property in association with others, which would include their right to land, to free, prior and informed consent, to exercise their customary law and to maintain their customary institutions.”²³ “The African Charter and the UNDRIP both explicitly recognise the right to self-determination of,

respectively, peoples and indigenous peoples.”²⁴

Furthermore, Cameroon ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on 14 June 1992 and is bound to the COP7 decisions taken in 2004, notably its Decision VII.28 on Protected Areas, which

“recalls the obligations of the Parties towards indigenous and local communities in accordance with article 8(j) and related provisions and notes that the establishment, management and planning of protected areas should take place with the **full and effective participation of, and full respect for the rights** of, indigenous and local communities consistent with national law and applicable international obligations (emphasis added)”²⁵

As such all forest peoples – whether defined as indigenous or not - should have a strong basis for asserting rights to their collective lands under customary law. As will be shown in the report below, these rights are, for example, not fully respected by the procedures applied to the management of the Takamanda National Park (TNP).

The chief of Kajifu with list of prohibited activities in the park and fines for defaulters © Samuel Nnah Ndobe



3 Managing Cameroon's Biodiversity and Carbon Credits

3.1 Cameroon's national forest policy and its execution

The basic framework of Cameroon's current forest policy has been laid down in The Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries Law No. 94/01 of 1994 and decrees or amendments added later, which led to the elaboration of the Forest and Environment Sector Programme or FESP. The stated objective of this law was "to perpetuate and develop the economic, ecological and social functions of the forest within the framework of integrated and participatory management, capable of sustainably and durably ensuring the conservation and the use of resources of the forest ecosystem".²⁶

Established in 2004, FESP has to be seen in the context of a broader national policy, Cameroon Vision 2035, the ambitious aim to upgrade the country's status to that of an "emerging nation" by 2035. As stipulated in the Poverty Reduction Growth and Employment Strategy Document (PRSD) the objective is to improve the national economy through local development. The implementation of it is entrusted to the above mentioned Forest and Environment Sector Programme (FESP), assisted by a series of programmes which include PNGE, PAFN, PRGIE, PCGBC, Programme for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in South West Region (PSMNR/SWR).

The government is supposed to take only "the place of a facilitator so that the implementation takes place through and to the benefit of all stakeholders, including primarily the most vulnerable groups – the local communities and the indigenous communities, women, etc."²⁷.

As 80% of the total population (with the majority living in rural areas) is directly or indirectly dependent on natural and forest products, the forest, its resources and its inhabitants are an important pillar of the future economic development plans. And even though potential revenues from carbon sequestration have hardly been mentioned in some of the forest management programmes, the new mechanism to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) does occupy an important place in the national strategy.

While the main direction of the strategies and programmes has been defined, the implementation will have to address parallel structures and procedures, as no harmonised land use plan exists: in general, the use of forest space is governed by forest zoning plans under the management of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF). According to the forest zoning covering 14,000,000 ha of the southern forest, the forests of Cameroon are composed of the permanent forest estate (DPF) and the non-permanent forest estate (DFNP). The permanent forest estate consists of lands permanently assigned to the forest and/or to wildlife habitat and represents

close to 60% of the 14 million hectares that have been subject to land use. The estimated 12.65 million ha consists of (i) protected areas (3.7 million ha) (ii) 114 production forests or UFA (7.08 million ha) (iii) close to 20 officially classified communal forests (around 500,840 ha). The non-permanent forest estate is a multiple-use/multi-purpose estate and consists of forest lands that can be assigned to uses other than forestry. Whilst both of these areas are under some form of state control, they differ in terms of how the state can grant use and how rights can be enjoyed by civil society or the private sector. The DFP includes both production and protection forests and can be in the public or private domain as well as in the domain of a local council. Forests in the DFP are in the national domain but under certain circumstances may be privately owned.²⁸ “However, the community forests (around 1,502,348 ha) are subject to (DFNP-) conservation management and are thus subject to the implementation of a simple management plan and an environmental impact assessment.”²⁹

This is just one example of procedures and aims, which still contradict decisions concerning indigenous peoples’ or forest dependent communities’ rights and roles in conservation. In other words: it is not yet clear how the MINFOF-classifications, their regulations and procedures can accommodate the MINEPDED-structures laid out in the REDD-Preparation Proposals (R-PP, see below) and vice versa.

3.2 Cameroon’s REDD process

Initially proposed by the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), REDD was seized upon by Cameroon in 2005 as an opportunity to contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions and to finance sustainable national development. The general objective of the national REDD pilot project was the – mainly technical - assessment of deforestation and forest degradation, including monitoring and mapping of vegetation cover changes, carbon emission accounting and capacity building of Cameroonian staff and the corresponding technology transfer.³⁰

The principle tools and conditions for the implementation of REDD+ in Cameroon were outlined in a “Readiness-Plan Idea Note” or R-PIN, which was approved by the FCPF in 2008. However, it took another two years of lengthy negotiations with the World Bank to receive the grant necessary to develop the “REDD-Preparation Proposals” or R-PP.³¹

The R-PP was finally submitted to the FCPF in August 2012 and was approved in February 2013, on condition of minor changes to be verified by a World Bank mission in June 2013, to open the way for the allocation of a 3,4 million USD grant.³² To date negotiations between the World Bank and the Government of Cameroon for the signing of the grant agreement are still under way.

The elaboration and execution of the national REDD-strategy was primarily entrusted to the

Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) created in 2004, while the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) occupies a secondary role so far. The MINEPDED is to work in close cooperation with a decision making Steering Committee, in which “several categories of stakeholders, namely government services, civil society, indigenous peoples, the private sector and elected representatives” should be included. It will be composed of 19 members, of which 14 are administrative representatives (the president’s office and other ministries concerned). One of the remaining five seats will be allocated to a representative of the indigenous peoples, who have been given a special status concerning their presence in decision making on all levels, and another one to Civil Society Organisations (CSO).³³ Their influence will depend on voting procedures to be adopted in this committee: if decisions will be taken on a two-thirds majority basis, the indigenous representative will have virtually no say at all and decisions regarding indigenous peoples will again be dictated by the overwhelming majority of government representatives in this body.

In principle it is acknowledged that REDD+ is a new mechanism and decision-making should be based on ‘*lessons learned on a consensus process*’³⁴. Although structures and functioning rules have been outlined in the R-PP, it will have to be proven in future, whether the ambitions to install an “all inclusive, participatory and bottom-up”³⁵ process can be fulfilled. For the moment, this body, as well as some of its executing services, “are not up and running so far, although created”.³⁶

The proposed structures, particularly at the sub-national level, are to be established progressively. The Steering Committee is to be assisted by a Technical Secretariat, which should assure the implementation of the mechanism at national (inter-ministerial coordination) level and at the local level through Departmental Technical Committees. Presided over by the Prefect of the Department in question, these committees will be composed of ministerial representatives (MINEPDED and MINFOF) and “all stakeholders”, including representatives of local communities, indigenous peoples and traditional leaders.³⁷

These decentralised sub-regional bodies are the important hinges of the participatory process: they are supposed to offer the basic platform for information exchange, discussions and reflections on the national REDD+ strategy and facilitate consultations for the local REDD-activities. They should also be responsible for putting in place the MRV (Monitoring, Reporting and Verification) mechanisms for local REDD-projects - and thus should guarantee that Free prior and informed consent will be respected.³⁸

The proposals underline the government’s commitment to revise and amend existing laws, including The Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries Law, to accommodate needs of the “forgotten”. They propose “a strong consultation and participation plan ... to put in place a participatory and inclusive process”, with special attention paid to “vulnerable groups” like women and

indigenous peoples. While the document states that “no specific consultation has actually been conducted with indigenous peoples to get their consent in connection with REDD+”, it insists that “indigenous peoples have been systematically included in consultations and reflections to draft this R-PP”.³⁹

The document refers to already existing experiences on participation like the CC (Climate Change) platform created in 2011 as an interface between the government and civil society or the Framework Law on Environmental Management of 1996 that demands consultations and public hearings with all stakeholders in the context of environmental impact studies for each project. In regards to indigenous peoples it recalls “the Méthodologie d’Approche participative des Populations Pygmée [Pygmy People Participatory Approach] or MAPAPPY” as a “useful tool for indigenous peoples’ consultation”, “adapted to ...and approved by indigenous peoples”. Other examples cited are the concerted cross border management, i.e. with COMIFAC partners or the decentralised and participatory FLEGT programme, a voluntary partnership agreement with the European Union to assure the traceability of exported timber in order to reduce illegal logging.⁴⁰

A timetable specifying the different consultation phases, including a particular time frame for the accomplishment of FPIC, has been drawn up.⁴¹ Like the time lines proposed to establish other components (e.g. awareness raising, capacity building, clarification on carbon rights, etc.), it sees the period between mid-2013 to 2015 as being sufficient to conduct all the requested consultations.

The first step towards the solution to most of the yet unsolved legal and structural problems of the future REDD+ process put forward is the compulsory application of the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) as a continuous assessment of all projects. The responsibility to execute the SESA is referred to the divisional level of the Technical Committees. Without specifying its concrete functioning, the document suggests that the aspects to be considered in this assessment process “include (identification and) participation of stakeholders, land tenure and land use, governance issues, risk and mitigation evaluation, conflict management and benefit sharing”.

If the departmental branch of the Technical Committees is presented as the hinge of the participatory process, its tool SESA has to be considered as the pivot point, which is supposed to point out all the difficulties to be addressed. It should not only encompass monitoring, reporting and verification, but also channel grievances and assure communication and transparency.

3.3 Equitable benefit sharing

Certainly one of the big hurdles to master in any future REDD+ project is the equitable benefit

sharing. The answer to the question “to whom do the carbon rights in Cameroon belong?” is complex, since the existing laws (real estate law, forestry law, land use regulations, charcoal law, etc.) and proposed mechanisms are partly mutually contradictory. Landownership is regulated by two parallel systems: a national, generalised law, based on the registration of the land either by an individual or by an entity; secondly, a traditional right, which gives local communities a customary access to use of forest and its products. Usually the distribution of land for settlement and subsistence farming lies in the hands of a traditional chief or is decided upon by the respective community. In case of conflict, however, state jurisdiction gives precedence of the state law over customary rights.⁴²

While The Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries Law of 1994 explicitly recognises the right of way for forest inhabitants and customary use of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) even in communal domains and encourages the establishment of community forests as part of the participatory management, it has not clarified the land tenure situation.⁴³ In principle all “vacant land” (i.e. not registered) belongs to the state. As very few properties have been registered (barely 2% of all land, counting 8 community forests in the whole of Cameroon in 2011)⁴⁴, most of the land is designated as “vacant”. One of the reasons why communities hesitate to claim ownership over the 5000 ha of forest granted to them within the DFNP are the high registration costs⁴⁵ (apart from the fact that the non-permanent forest domains are usually far too small to carve out 5000 ha chunks for community forests). Another discriminative reason is the difficulty, especially for indigenous peoples, to procure official identity documents, leaving them deprived of access to most public services. In practice it means that the right to customary land use is valid as long as the state has not decided otherwise.⁴⁶ Civil society and indigenous peoples report on a tendency to favour large-scale investors in agro-industrial businesses with long-term leases over community rights.⁴⁷ Thus, land is at the heart of the debates concerning the inconsistencies of the possible uses of space – in particular forests - and the profits linked to it.

The mechanism for benefit sharing of carbon credits proposed in the R-PP is very vague and refers to future discussions. However, it underlines the fact that the state will play the essential role in the management of any REDD-funds. The only concrete mechanism mentioned is the RFA or AFF (Redevance Forestière Annuelle or Annual Forest Fee) already in place. These tax revenues are split according to the following distribution: 50% goes to the state treasury, 20% to municipalities, 20% to FEICOM (Special Equipment and Inter-municipality Intervention Fund) and 10% to the community affected by the project. The AFF was originally also designated to be the (only) part of the REDD-profits to be accorded to local forest communities, but criticism by stakeholders has led to the possible inclusion of the FEICOM as additional source for contributions to communities.⁴⁸

At the time of compilation of the case study there was not yet any official statement available

on the findings of the above mentioned World Bank validation mission in June 2013. However, it can only be a question of time before the grants for the development of a national REDD+ strategy are allocated. In the meantime, there are various REDD-related projects on sub-national level already in place, notably by foreign NGOs such as WWF (Mount Cameroon, TRIDOM-Project and Sangha Trinational) and the WCS (Takamanda-Mone Unit, TRIDOM-Project).⁴⁹ Integrating these projects into the REDD+ process on the local level, especially those primarily concerned with forest or animal conservation, will present a major challenge. This may pose difficulties, as they did not always comply with the required FPIC rules from the beginning. At least in one case, (see report below) it is predicted that the project cannot be viable for any REDD approbation, unless completely remodelled and restarted from scratch. The authors of the R-PP have acknowledged conceptual flaws and pointed out a number of questions to be addressed “as soon as possible”; amongst others the effective integration of “vulnerable stakeholders” (like women and indigenous peoples) into participative bodies and mechanisms, admitting at the same time, that there are no true “bottom-up” structures in place yet - neither for them nor for the majority of local communities.⁵⁰ To comply with REDD-requirements, the government was obliged to assure the revision of all such relevant existing legislation and procedures.

4 German development cooperation with Cameroon

As mentioned above, Germany has made the protection of biodiversity and the reduction of climate change emissions – and thus the sustainable management of tropical forests – one of three priority aims of its development cooperation. Acknowledging the importance of the forest as an important food and income source for a large number of people, the German government supports Cameroon’s implementation of its sustainable forestry and environmental programmes. “GIZ advises Cameroon in developing a national climate policy. This is closely linked with the national strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through reducing deforestation and forest degradation, known as the REDD mechanism.” It coincides with the cooperation objective to promote good governance through decentralisation and transparent participative development. The overall aid project, financed to a major degree by KfW,

“provides expert and process consultancy. It supports the Ministries and other government bodies in realising the Forest-Environment Sector Programme, for example, through revising the Forestry Law and the drafting political strategies and instruments. In particular, the cooperation between the Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and selected regional administrations is promoted. Capacity development of those in positions of national responsibility and of the organisations for which they work is an important component at national, regional and local level.”

In addition

“GIZ’s programme supports the municipalities and their partners, for example public and private companies, in the management of their municipal forests. They are advised, for example, on how forestry income can be used and forestry reserves transferred to their users. This promotes the sustainable use of forest resources by municipalities and private companies.”

The German agency claims that

“since GIZ began its support in 2003, the areas of permanently designated and thus protected forests in Cameroon have nearly doubled from 4.6 million hectares (2003) to 9 million hectares (2011). The number of designated municipal forests also rose between 2007 and 2011 from 6 to 14, and the area they cover more than quadrupled, from 81,000 to 350,000 hectares.”⁵¹

As regards REDD and indigenous peoples, German development cooperation is based on

“international agreements such as the ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. The strategic concept Human Rights in German Development Policy (2011) supports the implementation of Free Prior Informed Consent.” German development cooperation recognises that “participation of indigenous groups plays a crucial role for the implementation of REDD.” The KfW bank “has enshrined the respect for social and cultural rights of indigenous populations in its Sustainability Guideline” and “concrete project activities cover, for example, land use entitlements, legal advice, conflict resolution/mediation and management advice on handling REDD benefits. Care is also taken to employ culturally adapted communication media”.⁵² Despite the fact, that there is no clear operational procedure for the REDD process and participation in the context of FPIC is seen as an “iterative process” of a broad spectrum of measures, KfW confirms in its document, that a “refusal of consent ... must result in a freeze or revision of the envisaged project”.⁵³

Apart from some NGOs there are also private German companies involved in the REDD+ process in Cameroon, notably the GAF AG and GFA Invest. Both offer a variety of services to put REDD projects on track, from fund raising to management advice and feasibility evaluation. The GAF AG has established a part of the national reference framework for evaluation of deforestation and forest degradation as well as carbon emission accounting.⁵⁴ GFA Invest has carried out the feasibility study for a REDD-project in and around the Mount Cameroon National Park, belonging to the Takamanda-Mone-TOU, and is an integral part of the management of the PSMNR-SWR.⁵⁵

The tri-national park project TRIDOM and the PSMNR-SWR represent the main focus of German development cooperation. Its involvement on all levels – from formulating to implementing – of Cameroon’s environmental policies underlines the co-responsibility of German agencies and companies in on-going REDD-related activities in Cameroon and the Programme for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in South West Region (PSMNR-SWR) in particular.

5 The Takamanda Project

5.1 The creation of the TNP

The Takamanda National Park is situated in the southwest of the Akwaya Sub-Division in the South West Region of Cameroon and stretches along the border with Nigeria. Its 67,599 ha are covered mainly with dense forest, ranging according to the rising altitudes and diminishing rainfalls from south to north from lowland to ridge forest, mid-elevation to mountain forest, finally giving way to grassland in the extreme north of the park. Each of the vegetation covers features distinct animal and plant species, some of them endemic.

Originally created in 1934 under British colonial administration as forest reserve with clear production objectivities (i.e. kept for later logging), it has become a National Park by Prime Ministerial Decree in 2008 to conserve and protect its rich biodiversity. The upgrading of the reserve into a National Park was initiated in August 2003 during the Limbe 3rd International Workshop and Conference on the Cross River Gorilla. The park forms part of the trans-boundary protected area with Nigeria's Cross River National Park, expected to safeguard an estimated 115 gorillas—a third of the Cross River gorilla population—along with other rare species. The prospect of a future trans frontier park has certainly influenced the decision to change the status of Takamanda. According to the Management Plan for the park project this upgrading was initiated in 2000 by the German-Cameroon sponsored Project for the Protection of Forests around Akwaya (PROFA) with the Takamanda Forest Reserve (TFR) as the core area, with the aim to “conduct relevant baseline studies and elaborate a participatory management plan for the TFR”. The “biodiversity importance of the reserve led the main technical stakeholders (MINEF, GTZ, WCS) to unanimously recommend that the Takamanda Forest Reserve (TFR) be upgraded to a higher status.”⁵⁶ The sensitisation and consultation concerning this upgrading was carried out by “the Mamfe Site of the GTZ-sponsored Programme des Gestion Durables des Ressources Naturelles (PGDRN)” (or PSMNR-SWR in English). The document describes this process as follows:

“The first consultative meeting organised with the representatives of the local communities to get their opinion on this new thinking in July 2004 at Mamfe (jointly sponsored by GTZ and WCS) ended without an agreement. However with further sensitisation, coupled with the commencement of the PSMNR-SWR, the TFR was successfully upgraded to a national park in November 2008 with the full support of all stakeholders.”⁵⁷

As will be shown in the report below, this consensus was achieved by promises that are yet to be fulfilled.

This upgrading of its status also changed the level of user rights and their surveillance. Defined as a protected area, it falls under DFP regulations, which restricts access to NTFP and land resources. But the global objective for management of this park is “to conserve the biodiversity of Takamanda National Park and its periphery with the participation of all stakeholders while contributing towards the sustainable development of local communities”.⁵⁸

The Takamanda National Park (TNP) is part of the Programme for the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in the South West Region (PSMNR-SWR), put in place in four geographic Technical Operating Units (TOUs). The programme is responsible for the sectorial implementation of the national strategy of environmental conservation, reduction of poverty and local economic development objectives. The PSMNR-SWR “enjoys the financial support for conservation and development from the Cameroon-German Cooperation through the German Development Bank (KfW) and Cameroon Government” and receives “financial and technical expertise support for conservation from various international conservation and development partner organisations including the WCS, WWF and GTZ” (i.e. GIZ).⁵⁹

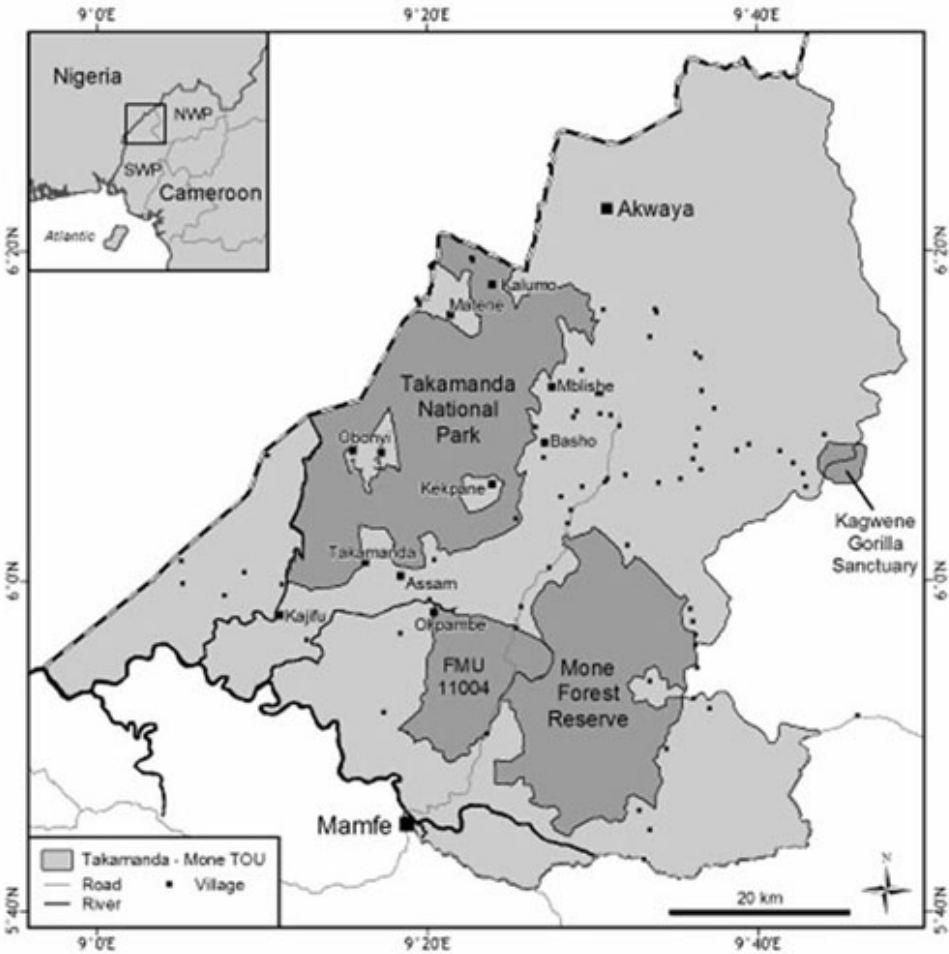


Figure 1. Map of the Takamanda-Mone Technical Operations Unit and Takamanda National Park⁶⁰

While MINFOF is the principle executor of the program, several exterior agencies are either directly or indirectly involved in it. The major part of the funding is done by the German development bank KfW, while the German development agency GIZ (former DED) is directly responsible for the implementation of the community development measures that should provide local communities with alternative income possibilities to reduce pressure on park resources as NTFP, game, fish and land for subsistence or cash crop agriculture.⁶¹

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), a US-based NGO whose purpose is “saving wildlife and wild places globally”⁶², works in close cooperation with the regional ministerial staff (divisional delegation) and is directly engaged in the management of the park on all levels, including trans-boundary training programs in neighbouring Nigeria. Apart from its administrative contribution, the organisation is also directly involved in park protection measures (like patrols) and responsible for the research and monitoring component. In the context of the participatory management program that concerns the local population, it is in charge of conservation education, i.e. sensitising and mobilising the forest inhabitants for conservation measures.⁶³

5.2 The population concerned

The park project population is estimated to be 15,700 inhabitants. Four villages are situated in what have now become enclaves inside the park, while 16 share the external boundaries of the park on the Cameroonian side and six on the Nigerian side of the border. The peripheral zone counts 32 villages in all.⁶⁴ In its REDD+ feasibility study the WCS estimates the inhabitants directly affecting the park at 12,000, the total population of the projected REDD+ Takamanda-Mone-area at 28,000 inhabitants.⁶⁵

The population groups in and around the park belong to a number of different “ethnic entities”:

“Anyang (30%) in the south and central, Boki (39%) in the southwest, Asumbo in the northeast, Becheve (10%) in the north, Basho (5%) in the east and the Belege (Ovande, 8%) in the northwest constitute the ethnic groups around the Takamanda National Park. However, the Aku of Nigerian origin and Fulani (Bororo) from further north of Cameroon and Nigeria - both immigrants in the area - now intersperse the Becheve and Asumbo ethnic groups in the grassland, north of the park. The main local languages spoken in the park area are: Boki, Denyang, Becheve and Vande.”⁶⁶

The groups are not specifically identified as “indigenous”, although sometimes referred to as such: “Like elsewhere in Cameroon the indigenous people of the Takamanda National Park area have certain user rights in the adjacent forest to their communities.”⁶⁷ There seems to be no doubt concerning the importance of the forest for the cultural identity of the local population

and its relationship to the forest's fauna and flora. The MINFOF-document states that:

“these ethnic groups have strong cultural ties to the forest and its resources, and have developed traditional mechanisms to regulate access like the Ekpe and Makpo societies. Also, local taboos prohibiting the use of certain species like gorilla, snakes, as bush meat, are still strong and have probably contributed to their conservation. However, continuous killing for commercial bush meat in recent years means weak respect for traditional intuitions and taboos”.⁶⁸

5.3 The detailed zoning

The PSMNR-SWR claims a “holistic landscape approach”, that is supposed to treat all aspects of development as having an equal level of importance. The result is a multifaceted zoning on three levels, i.e. the “Regional Macro Level” (corresponding to the mentioned TOUs), the “Local Macro Level” (which defines protected areas, enclaves, peripheral zones, game and other corridors, forest reserves, logging areas, wildlife sanctuaries, etc.) and the “Micro Level” (taking into account the ecological importance of certain plant and animal species, i.e. core zones, fragile ecological zones, potential research or eco-tourism sites, with different user rules for each).⁶⁹

Therefore, the Takamanda-Mone-TOU incorporates, like the other three TOUs of the South West Region, a great variety of functions. It includes protected areas, logging reserves and logging concession areas (FMUs), a wildlife sanctuary (Kagwene), settlements, council and community forests as well as agricultural production areas, featuring both traditional and agro-industrial methods. The area chosen for a REDD+ project, for which the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) has carried out the conceptual design and the feasibility study on carbon emission scenarios, covers large parts of this TOU.⁷⁰

In the context of the report on the implementation of REDD-related projects and programs, three of these zones will be of closer interest.

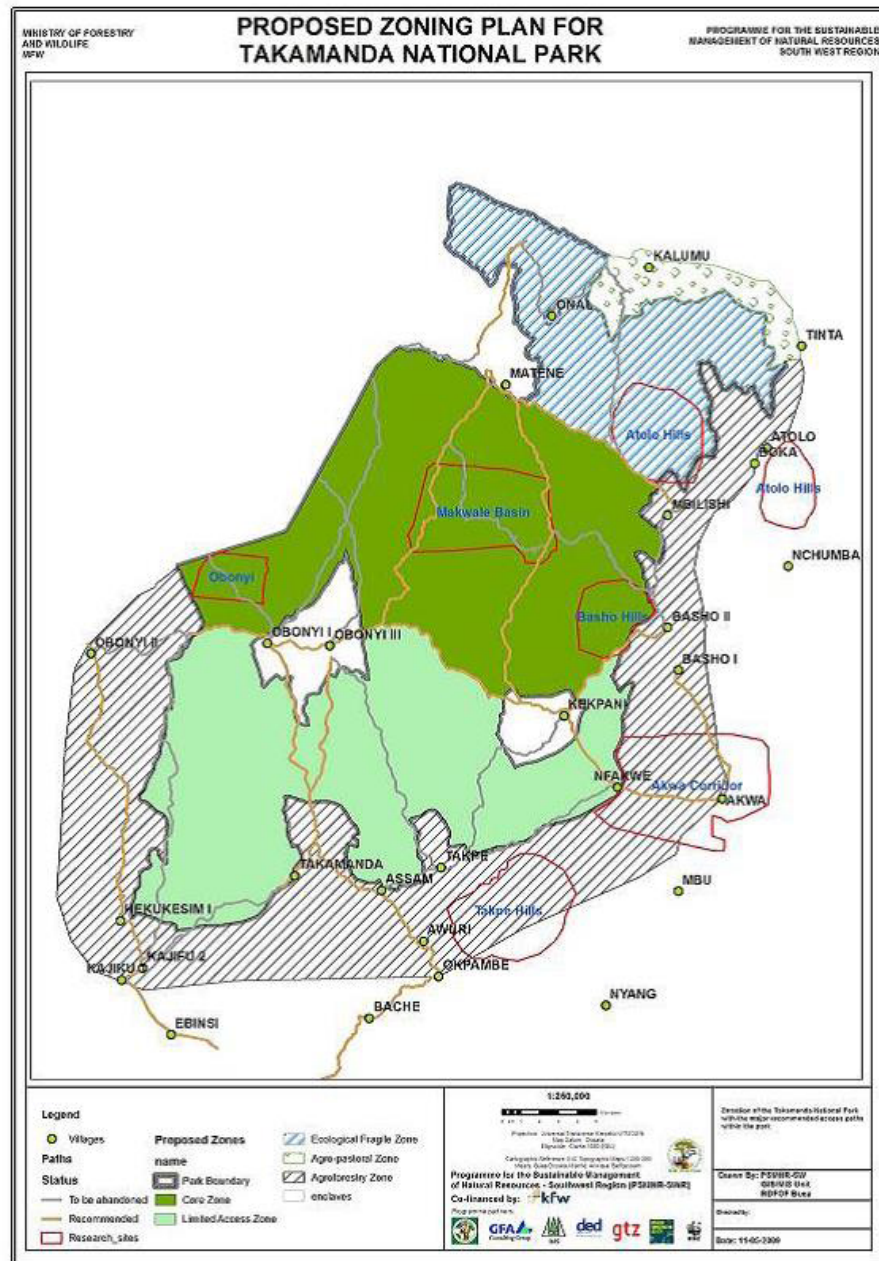


Figure 3: Micro Zonation of Takamanda National Park⁷³

Core Zone:

The two enclave villages visited in early July (see below), Obonyi I and Obonyi III, are situated just south of the **Core Zone**, which features following management objectives;⁷⁴

- To promote population increase of animals for the restoration of other zones (act as a reservoir);

- To protect the existing ecological habitat
- To enhance natural regeneration of plant species especially NTFPs (Bush mango, Hausa stick, Yoruba stick);
- To promote uninterrupted movement (gene flow) of animal species between the two national parks (CRNP and TNP)
- To reduce human influence.

Rules of use/accessibility

1. Right of passage using agreed paths (Matene to Kekpani, Matene to Obonyi III, Matene to Mbilishi, Basho I to Kekpani, Obonyi III to Kekpani, Obonyi I to Obonyi II);
2. Controlled and sustainable collection of NTFPs (except Hausa stick and Yoruba stick) within an agreed period;
3. No hunting and fishing;
4. Tourism and research allowed.

Management measures

1. Monitoring of NTFP collection;
2. Regular patrols;
3. Implement strategy to block unauthorised paths;
4. Implement research and tourism programmes;
5. Monitoring of wildlife population;
6. Monitoring of habitat change.

Limited Access Zone:

On its southern edge, the Obonyi enclave borders the **Limited Access Zone**, which also concerns the two other villages mentioned in the report, namely Takamanda and Kajifu at the southwestern tip of the park, as well as eight other villages. The main objective of managing this zone is

“to enhance the natural regeneration of already depleted resources through controlled community access and use of the existing resources (mainly NTFPs and fish). A subsidiary objective is to contribute to the local population needs for NTFPs and fish for home consumption... The continuous use of these products was a precondition for the acceptance

of the National Park during village to village sensitisation.”⁷⁵

Rules of use/accessibility

1. Right of passage using agreed paths (Obonyi II to Obonyi I, Obonyii III to Kekpani to Nfakwe, Kekpani to Basho II, Nfakwe to Takpe to Assam to Takamanda, Takamanda to Obonyi I and Obonyi III, Takamanda to Kajifu);
2. Sustainable collection of NTFPs (except Hausa stick and Yoruba stick) all year round for home consumption;
3. Traditional fishing without chemicals (biological and artificial) allowed with some restrictions for home consumption;
4. Sustainable collection of medicinal plants allowed;
5. Use of shrines and secret sites allowed

Management measures

1. Monitoring of NTFP collection;
2. Monitor fishing activities;
3. Regular patrols;
4. Implement strategy to block unauthorised paths.

Fragile Ecological Zone:

The Fragile Ecological Zone’s management objectives are⁷⁶:

1. To protect important watersheds of the Cross River basin;
2. To stop the regression of the forest line as a result of destructive activities like bush burning;
3. To discourage human settlement (especially the case of Mindi).

Rules of use/accessibility

1. Right of passage using agreed paths (Matene to Mbilishi, Matene to Obudu Cattle Ranch, Matene to Onal, Onal to Kalumo)
2. No bush burning except by park management
3. No grazing
4. Controlled and sustainable harvesting of NTFPs (e.g. tapping of natural palms)
5. Tourism and research allowed

Management measures

1. Monitoring of NTFP collection
2. Regular patrols
3. Implement strategy to block unauthorised paths
4. Implement research and tourism programmes
5. Implement prescribed bush burning
6. Incorporate pasture management in the support zone development programme
7. Implement a strategy for evacuation of illegal settlements
8. Monitoring of vegetation change and landslide risk
9. Sensitise the communities on natural disasters (landslides), watershed management and uncontrolled bush burning⁷⁷

6 The implementation of the project – selected impressions of a reporting mission

Between the 10th and 19th of July 2013 a team consisting of Samuel Nnah Ndobe (socio-economist) and two assistant graduates, Ms. Melvis Apoh and Mr. Joshua Ivor Njume, travelled to the TNP and surroundings with the aim to compile a report on the conditions of the implementation of the park project, especially regarding FPIC, participative management and alternative income activities. Despite the limited financial resources and very poor road conditions during the present rainy season, the team was able to visit two enclave villages (Obonyi I and Obonyi III) surrounded by the **Core Zone** and the **Limited Access Zone** and two peripheral villages close to the park (Takamanda and Kajifu) in the **Peripheral Zone** (see micro zonation above, fig. 3).

The team conducted interviews with representatives of these local communities. Meetings were held with a cross section of the village like in Obonyi I, and with selected resource persons like the chief, the council chairman, the Village Forest Management Committee (VFMC) leaders and the Cluster Committee Facilitator, NTFP cooperative representatives... A group of young people doing boundary demarcation in Takamanda was also spoken to. The team also had the opportunity to hold a broad community meeting with men, women and youths present in the community hall of Obonyi I and spoke to the chairperson of Obonyi III, who also happens to be the cluster facilitator of the Obonyi I, II, III and Takamanda clusters, and who was accompanied by some young people of the village. In Takamanda the team spoke to the chief's eldest son and a notable, as well as some young men processing bush mangoes. The team also witnessed a group of young men doing the demarcation of the park boundaries and spoke to a Common Initiative Group (CIG) involved in pig rearing, cassava processing and other sustainable income generating activities in Kajifu, as well as to the chief of Kajifu.

Due to interrupted road connections, the team could not travel to the northern part of the park, where some nomadic Fulani herdsmen and the community of Mendi were reportedly under threat of forced eviction. This part of the park is classified as **Fragile Ecological Zone** featuring very strict user rules (see above).

In addition, the team met regional authorities and politicians to discuss objectives and outlooks: In Mamfe interviews were held with local administrative authorities, including the assistant senior divisional officer (Abi Jacob Tavi), the TNP conservator (Walters Ashu), a senior staff of the TOU TNP/M (Ncha Martin Ashu of MINFOF), the mayor of Akwaya (Ekwale Martin Ekwale) and some local councilors from the Manyu area.

The assistants spoke to local authorities in Mamfe and some nearby villages, Egbekaw and Kechem, to have their views on the broader issues related to participation and FPIC. Samuel Nnah Ndoke personally interviewed the Conservator of the TNP, Walters Ashu, and spoke to the locally based Development Officer of the German institution, GIZ, Delphine Agbor, responsible for providing support to communities and the Park management. Staff of FORUDEF, a local NGO working in Akwaya, and the assistant coordinator of the TOU MINFOF provided very useful background information and guidance on local logistics to travel to the Park communities. Since the period of the trip coincided with the last days for the registration of candidates for the local council and parliamentary elections, the team was lucky to meet a group of aspiring councillors and parliamentarians while they processed papers for their candidature and held an informal discussion with a group of them from Mamfe central, Akwaya and Eyumojock subdivisions.

6.1 The findings

It is important to underline the following fact: Regarding the implementation of REDD or REDD+ projects or related payments as a direct or indirect source of income, the local representatives have stated very clearly that they had neither been informed nor consulted on the issue. In fact, they seemed to have no idea about REDD, let alone an opinion on it.

In general, stakeholder identification and **representation** are key elements of any participatory process, even more so in FPIC-based procedures required in REDD projects. As mentioned above, the Takamanda Management Plan intends to integrate the concerned forest dependent communities (the villages) into the governance of the park, with the “Park Management Committee” as the main decision taking body. Apart from “traditional leaders”, a supplementary representation is accorded to women and youth delegates.⁷⁸ The reporting mission makes the following assessment of how village representation is taken into account:

At the grassroots, there is the Village Forest Management Committees (VFMC), elected to represent the village with a representation of the different social segments of the village, including women and youth representation. All the Park villages have VFMCs, with 8 or 9 members selected by each village, including at least two women and two youth representatives. The different VFMCs are grouped into clusters, based on ethnicity and proximity. The cluster committees are made up of three representatives from each VFMC. There are six cluster committees in total. Each cluster elects a cluster facilitator, based on criteria provided by Park management. Amongst the criteria is the capacity to read and write reports to park authorities. The cluster facilitators have an allowance of an equivalence of over two hundred US dollars (US\$200). Though voted into the boards by their communities, they are assessed and evaluated only by the park authorities. This has

given the cluster facilitators more the status of members of the park staff, answerable only to the conservator and other park authorities. Samuel Nnah spoke to some village resource persons, who said that they had hardly ever seen the cluster facilitator of their village.

These regulations seem to have evolved from earlier provisions: The reporting team were told by communities that during the negotiations for the creation of the park they were asked to send representatives to the different negotiations at the level of Mamfe. Each village was asked to send seven representatives to these meetings. This was long before the village management committees were put in place.

The highest governance structure of the park, the Park Management Committee, only has two representatives from park villages and it is not clear how representation to this decision making committee is or will be selected. This body is responsible for the planning and reporting of the implementation of the activities in the park. As it also comprises high government officials right up to the ministerial level, it should serve as a forum for dialogue and exchange between grassroot deputies and higher authorities. Apart from the fact that the selection process for the two community seats is not clear at all, the body as such is put in question: as we were told by the park conservator, the committee has not been able to sit since the creation of the park due to financial difficulties. Hence communities have not been able to participate in the highest decision making body of the park, due to the fact that this body is not functioning and due to the absence of clear selection criteria for representatives and informed participation. Without such clear criteria, participation will be based on handpicked individuals, motivated by per diems or sitting allowances and not accountable to the communities.

In practice the cluster facilitators are often perceived as prolongation of the park management, as they cooperate with game wardens and police to arrest people. During the visit the team got notice of a report from a cluster facilitator to the park's conservator, denouncing a former inhabitant of his village of having killed a gorilla in his cluster area and asking for action to be taken against this man (see scanned report in annex below). The village forest management committee, for example, is responsible for patrol activities with the game guards during their regular patrols for which they are paid for. These personal incentives provided by Park authorities to a few (also) render them more accountable to the park management than to the community as their individual incentives are not known to the broader community.

The tension between park staff and community members was identified by the team. Communities, especially those in villages now turned into enclaves by the park, report that they are constantly being harassed by game guards while travelling from one village to another. Their travelling bags are brutally ransacked in search of bush meat. Park authorities harass them with guns during their ceremonies and seize their dane guns (flintlock or percussion muzzleloaders,

used in ceremonies like death ceremonies and annual festivals).⁷⁹ The park has more guards for repressive activities than development workers; from the figures the team got from the park management, the ratio of rangers for law enforcement versus community development staff is twelve to one.

FPIC and other development guidelines, including those of GIZ and KfW Bank, demand that **land or territorial claims** of forest dependent communities should be taken into account and a consensus be reached on this issue. The situation in the Takamanda Park does not reflect any satisfactory outcome for either of the parties. The case of the “Funali” (certainly referring to Fulani) and other herder communities in the north of the park (around Mendi), considered illegal settlers in the protected area, points out the lack of any discussion, let alone any mutual understanding⁸⁰. While the continuous traditional use of the forest and its products is perceived by the authorities as “encroachment” or “poaching” on and in the proclaimed protection area, the members of the communities feel unjustly harassed by the forest wardens and menaced in their livelihoods.

The team’s discussions with the some community resource persons in the enclave villages could not clarify where exactly the reserve boundaries were. The reserve was created during the colonial era, and the community said their parents were not even consulted in the creation of the boundaries of the reserve. They were only told that there were pillars in the forest indicating boundaries. An elderly villager in Obonyi I said:

“We heard we have a forest reserve, but we did not know where the boundaries were; they came and told us there was a place where we were supposed to end our activities, that they had pillars that were put there during the colonial era. They grouped Obonyi I, II, and III in Obonyi II; in that meeting they said (that) every village should vote seven people for another broader meeting, in early 2007. In that meeting they told us that our forest reserve was going to become a national park. We have had an idea about a national park from our neighbors in Okwango, in Nigeria, so we refused (and said) that we will not sign any paper for the forest to be converted into a national park because people cannot enter a national park”.

The old man went on to say that they were intimidated by park authorities, arguing that the forest belongs to the government and the communities have encroached onto a government reserve.

They finally signed the papers creating the national park, because they were promised that communities would have access to the forest for Non-Timber Forest products (NTFPs), like eru or *Gnetum Africanum* and bush mango or *Irvingia gabonensis*. These NTFPs, found growing in the wild inside the national parks, are the main income sources for the communities. As the

Chairman of the Obonyi II council puts it:

“They imposed on us that they wanted a National Park, we said this even to the Minister of Forest who attended the meeting. The minister said since Nigeria has a national park on the other side, it will be good to have one in Cameroon also, so that they can collaborate... they made us sign because they promised that our own national park will be a special one...”

Other promises made during the signing of the agreement include the “creation of farm-to-market roads and the development of innovative income generating activities that would reduce pressure on forests while creating significant incomes for the communities.”

Other commentaries point to the same direction:

Local political actors the team spoke to had mixed views about the participation of local communities in the decision to create the Park and in its management. While those close to the party in power felt that communities were participating, listing the projects developed by the park management, one councillor close to the experiences of the park villages had this to say:

“It is an infringement on the population, if a park is created, restricting people to secure their livelihoods. There is a lot of control over forest communities to collect and sell forest products... such that it seems we should write back to government to leave our forest alone... Government is imposing it on the communities; it does not clarify what benefits communities will get from the forest... Government should negotiate with communities... It should recruit and train local people to work in the parks. Most of the guards there are francophone and they feel it is a sort of colonisation, forcing us not to reap benefits from our forest. We know WCS and GIZ are the ones in command of the park, but these GIZ and WCS are all on the government side; since they have signed a convention with the government, they force communities to abide by what the government wants...”

The discontent of the Obonyi villagers with the **zoning regulations** is just another facet of the above mentioned land tenure problem. One of the main complaints of the enclave communities is the micro-zoning. They were accused of having encroached across the boundaries of the park, boundaries, which their communities had not been properly consulted on or agreed to. The community felt that there was no (re)negotiation of the demarcation and that the limits of the reserve were just maintained, despite their pleas that initial boundaries should be extended to accommodate the growing population of the village. Instead they were asked to abandon the areas they had encroached upon. They were given ten years (in 2007) to enjoy the food crops from the encroached areas; after that they would have to abandon them. We are barely four years away from that deadline and the community does not think that they have developed or will be able to develop sufficient alternatives that would permit them to live without the said

fields.

The **alternative income activities** are at the core of the concept of **mutual benefit sharing** “balancing biodiversity conservation with community development”⁸¹. They constitute the social pillar of the project: they should ensure that conservation measures, like restricted or forbidden access to land, game meat and other NTFP, is compensated or replaced by at least equally remunerating undertakings. These initiatives were and are supposed to be aided and developed by GIZ and its agencies. Their development is theoretically structured according to the “participatory approach” envisaged by the Takamanda Management Plan and GIZ and KfW guidelines. The reporting team was told by the GIZ officer of following decision making pattern applied to development initiatives:

The quality of participation is measured by how communities are involved in the identification, analysis and seeking of solutions to problems and issues that affect them. These solutions are then prioritised and implemented, based on pre-agreed timing and sharing of resources/ responsibilities. Communities participate in meetings with pre-information of what could be discussed in the meeting and how decisions will affect them; they are given enough time and support to do analyses and come out with informed positions. But at the same time it is stated that, though participation has happened to some extent, this participation has been very passive.

The report therefore puts in question, how free prior and informed consent (FPIC) is applied, as the projects proposed were unilaterally coming from the park management side. Indeed, communities said that most of their priorities were not implemented by the authorities and even when such priority activities were implanted, they did not get the adequate support to make these activities successful. As chief Asu of Obonyi I put it:

“...they hold meetings with us, we tell them our feelings and they choose what they can do. As our villages are so backwards in terms of education, we request a scholarship scheme for a few of our children to go to college and universities, so they can help us to better understand these issues, but they refuse...”

Other examples of failed projects lacking support include the introduction of snail farming and Eru domestication, as well as the cooperative initiative for communities to trade their NTFPs. The latter did not succeed due to lack of an extended education support. The NTFP cooperative looks like a good idea, but is not functioning well due to the lack of adequate financial and technical support. The team only found one project that was considered successful: the improved cassava seedlings provided to the women of Obonyi I, which enjoyed full appreciation.

It should also be noted in this context that the demarcation of the park’s boundaries by young villagers does not imply their consent with these borders; it simply means that, lacking any

other income facility, they resort to this activity as a paid job, despite their disagreement with it.

Another major complaint brought forward by the majority of villages was the unfulfilled promise to improve infrastructure to reach markets, as this was one of the conditions for their acceptance of the creation of the national park and the imposition of its restrictions. This includes the fact that the park management and partners did not respect community views in terms of the construction of roads or motorbike tracks in and around the park. The construction of these tracks, permitting access by motorbikes to the enclaves and peripheral villages that were inaccessible before, was well received by the communities. But the views of communities, in terms of where the roads should pass and the places where bridges should be constructed, were not taken into account. Despite the fact that communities were asked to contribute 10 per cent to the cost of constructing the roads through manual labour like transporting materials, clearing paths etc., their views were not taken into account. In less than four months after the construction of bridges, these bridges were carried away by rain due to overflowing rivers – an experience the reporting team involuntarily shared with local inhabitants during its fact finding mission.

7 Conclusions

The most important lesson drawn from the research and expressed in the team's field report is the value and need for FPIC in the conservation and management of the Takamanda National Park. Not only for the protection of the local communities' rights and their forest-dependent livelihoods, but also for reducing risks, on the side of the project proponent, through mutual understanding and agreement between all parties concerned - communities on the one hand and government and park management entities on the other.

It should be clear to everyone that the necessary protection of biodiversity and measures against climate change in the Takamanda context (and elsewhere) can only work on the basis of genuine consensus, reflecting a real partnership pursuing common aims. In principle this is not only acknowledged, but underlined by BMZ, KfW Bank and GIZ in their sustainable development objectives. But it is obvious from the research and testimonies that this spirit of partnership and mutual respect has not been followed. The structure and functioning of the representative bodies, as well as the results they produce, are totally contrary to FPIC and even to internal participatory management guidelines. Not only were the creation of the VFMCs and their "clustering" imposed on the communities, but also the set-up and functioning rules of these bodies. They correspond neither to any traditional institution, nor to the principle of agreements reached on same "eye level" or consensus.

Of course it can be argued that the TNP is a pure conservation project with no link to any REDD-relevant activity, i.e. not aimed at protecting carbon stock or at financing development with REDD compensations and therefore not bound to the application of strict REDD regulations. But even if the TNP and its adjacent twin in Nigeria should never be part of a REDD project, it is still required to follow the relevant international legal instruments applicable to Cameroon, especially since the constitution of Cameroon states that the international laws to which Cameroon is a party will supersede domestic law even where they provide different or additional rights than are found in national law. For example, under the **African Charter of Human and Peoples Rights**, and in conjunction with other international laws and agreements applicable to Cameroon (e.g. COP7 Decision VII.28):

- (i) All peoples who have demonstrable collective rights to land under customary law have collective rights to their customary lands and resources including the rights of ownership
- (ii) Communities form distinct peoples who manage their lands collectively under customary rules and with strong cultural connections to their lands, territories

and natural resources have the legal right to give or withhold their consent about decisions affecting those lands and resources.

For this reason many questions concerning the creation and present management of the TNP remain unanswered.

The following extract from the official Takamanda management plan points to the roots of the problem, it indicates the limited efforts which the present management is prepared to make to integrate local communities into decision taking: “Although legal texts exist to empower villagers within and around PAs to participate in the management, it specifies that this should be voluntary. Practically, this is difficult in the field considering the risk and time requirements for this participation.”⁸² This statement grossly contradicts demands found in KfW- and GIZ-guidelines, as well as in Cameroon’s commitments under international law, concerning participatory management and what is claimed to be implemented. It also ridicules all provisions for “culturally adapted communication means” and “sufficient time lapses for internal decision findings”.

While the election of the VFMCs may have been done in a democratic way according to the rules laid down (or imposed) by international and national authorities, it is not clear at all, whether the communities have the occasion to question their representation or have it changed. How often do elections to these bodies take place? To what extent does the prerequisite of being able to read and write limit the choice of candidates to the function of cluster facilitator? That being the case, what happened to the capacity building schemes planned for (and already financed)?⁸³ The situation clearly reflects an incomplete process, which needs more examination, discussion and final agreements on all levels, before new measures are put in place. In this context it also seems obvious that paying allowances or salaries to some representatives or workers belonging to the communities is not sufficient action to fulfil participation standards or solve existing problems between authorities and the villages concerned.

The fact that the recent transformation of the former colonial forest reserve into a national park was not subject to any renegotiation of the area’s boundaries, demonstrates that rights over traditional territories and the voiced opposition to the demarcation was consciously ignored by the authorities, as villagers were just given the choice to accept or refuse the colonial land taking. One would have expected the transformation of the reserve to be an opportunity to implement FPIC standards, especially as the creation of the national park coincided with Cameroon’s signing of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, demanding respect of ancestral and traditional territories.

The condition, under which the acceptance of the boundaries by the communities was reached, needs closer examination. The exchange of traditional user rights for better roads and/or bike

tracks cannot be called a consensus on land tenure, especially if the infrastructure remains “a nightmare”.⁸⁴ It goes hand in hand with the dissatisfaction concerning some of the alternative income activities developed under GIZ responsibility. The deficiency of child education and capacity building in general, already deplored in the TNP Management Plan⁸⁵, still waits to be addressed, as the few training programs offered mainly concerned the enforcement of zoning rules.

And last but not least, even if this case study could not, for obvious reasons, sufficiently clarify opposing statements and assessments, it is undeniable that a whole range of measures of the park project – with or without a REDD-component - do not enjoy the consent of the people living under its conditions. The simple fact that a certain number of the communities’ inhabitants concerned by the park management, including some of the management’s “cooperation partners”, have seized the occasion of being interviewed by the reporting team to express their discontent, clearly shows a lack of other means to voice their grievances or disaccord with boundaries, treatment by authorities, representation, information, development activities, education, road construction and decision making in general.

End Notes:

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