

Enhancing sustainable forest management in Cameroon through a model forest based approach

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SUMMARY

A range of countries have sought more equitable governance of their natural resources, by devolving decision-making and resource control to local populations. In 1994, Cameroon adopted a new law granting local communities the possibility of greater control over forests, principally in response to donor conditionality on Structural Adjustment Loans (SALs). However, the enactment of the law lacked significant domestic support. Conflicting interests and Cameroon's highly centralized administrative machinery have prevented effective devolution of forest management. In 2003, the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and a consortium of institutional stakeholders started the Model Forest Project in Cameroon. This project is part of the International Model Forest Network (IMFN). The goal of the IMFN is to assist in the development of sustainable management of forests around the world, while taking into account the needs of local communities. In 2005, the government of Cameroon recognized Campo Ma'an and Dja et Mpomo as model forest sites. The partnership involved, policy dimensions, government commitment, accomplishment to date and its contributions to national and sub regional forestry programmes are discussed.

Keywords: partnership, governance, model forest, Cameroon, International Model Forest Network (IMFN)

Renforcer la gestion durable des forêts au Cameroun à travers une approche basée sur un modèle forestier

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Une diversité de pays s'est mise à la recherche d'une gouvernance plus équitable de leurs ressources naturelles, en déléguant la prise de décision et le contrôle des ressources aux populations locales. En 1994, le Cameroun a adopté une nouvelle loi octroyant aux communautés locales la possibilité d'un contrôle plus importants des forêts, en réponse principalement à la condition accompagnant le don des prêts d'ajustement structurels (SALs). La mise en force de cette loi manquait cependant singulièrement de support domestique. Des conflits d'intérêt et la machine administrative hautement centralisée du Cameroun ont empêché une délégation efficace de la gestion forestière. Le Centre pour la recherche forestière internationale (CIFOR) et un ensemble d'institutions ayant partie-prenante commencèrent le projet du modèle forestier au Cameroun en 2003. Ce projet fait partie du Réseau international de modèles forestiers (IMFN). Le but de l'IMFN est d'aider le développement de la gestion durable des forêts autour du monde, tout en prenant en compte les besoins des communautés locales. Le gouvernement camerounais a reconnu Campo Ma'an, Dja, et Mpomo comme sites de modèles forestiers. Le partenariat comprenait des dimensions de politique, une décision ferme du gouvernement de prendre part, les résultats jusqu'à ce jour, et ses contributions de foresterie nationale et sous-régionale sont examinées.

Mejoramiento de la gestión forestal sostenible en Camerún mediante un modelo con base forestal

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Numerosos países han intentado lograr una administración más equitativa de sus recursos naturales mediante la devolución de la toma de decisiones y del control de los recursos a las comunidades locales. En 1994, debido en gran medida a las demandas de los países donantes de los Préstamos de Ajuste Estructural (PAE), se adoptó en Camerún una nueva ley que otorgaba a las poblaciones locales la posibilidad de ejercer un mayor control sobre los bosques. Sin embargo, la implementación de la ley no contó con apoyo suficiente dentro del país. Los conflictos entre grupos interesados y la maquinaria administrativa muy centralizada del país han impedido una devolución eficaz de la gestión forestal. En 2003, el Centro de Investigación Forestal Internacional (CIFOR) y un consorcio de grupos interesados institucionales inauguraron el Proyecto Forestal Modelo en Camerún, proyecto que forma parte de la Red Internacional de Bosques Modelo (RIBM). El objetivo de la RIBM consiste en promover el desarrollo de la gestión forestal sostenible de los bosques del mundo, sin olvidar las necesidades de las comunidades locales. En 2005, el gobierno de Camerún reconoció Campo Ma'an y Dja et Mpomo como bosques modelo. En este estudio se analiza el trabajo conjunto de las instituciones, el compromiso gubernamental, dimensiones políticas, y lo que se ha logrado hasta ahora, incluyendo los aportes del proyecto a los programas forestales nacionales y sub-regionales.

INTRODUCTION

The humid forest zone covers approximately 22 million hectares of southern Cameroon, forming the western margins of the large tract of forest of Central Africa. The flora and fauna of the rainforest of Cameroon are exceptionally rich and diverse, with numerous endemic species (Gartlan 1989). Apart from its economic importance at the national level, this forest also has a variety of other complementary functions. For the people living nearby it plays a social and cultural role as well as an economic one, while for the international community it is also of ecological and scientific interest. These multiple and sometimes competing interests in the way the forest is used can lead to controversy where problems of environmental degradation, equity and persistent poverty translate into increased deforestation, unequal social access to resources and benefits, degrading environmental services, low productivity of land and labour and a weak policy and institutional environment.

For the entire colonial period up to the mid-1990s, the forests of Cameroon were managed through a centrally-directed structure and process, which expropriated resources and control from local communities. This policy excluded these communities from accessing forest resources and accruing economic benefits from them (Diaw *et al.* 1997, Ngwasiri 1998). A variety of interacting factors including donor pressures, international economic interests, local political considerations, sheer weight of local tenurial and use pressures, as well as pressure from civil society movements ushered in a pro-people trend in policy, which culminated in the enactment of the 1994 Forest Law and its complementary decree of application (Ekoko 1997, Essama-Nssah and Gockowski 2000, Brown and Schreckenberg 2001). Forest-sector reforms immediately preceding the 1994 law included a zoning plan that divides forests into a permanent zone, exclusively owned and managed by the state, and a non-permanent zone, owned by the state but used and managed by a variety of other actors including municipalities, private individuals, and local communities.

Cameroon overhauled its legislative framework as a means of increasing the efficiency of industry, ensuring sustainable natural resource management and promoting community participation in forest management. The reforms were shaped by the interacting interests of a range of actors within Cameroon and beyond. The 1994 Forest Law was, to a significant extent, imposed on the Government of Cameroon as a condition for financial support under structural reforms funded by the Bretton Woods institutions, particularly the World Bank (Ekoko 1997, Brown and Schreckenberg 2001). The Bank's major concern was to improve the efficiency of industry. Although some local politicians, especially those in the opposition, were concerned about securing the interests of the ordinary Cameroonian in the ensuing developments, they were overridden by a compliant executive branch of government that was wary about jeopardizing the Bank's support at a time when the country was emerging from a crippling economic crisis (Ekoko 1997). Meanwhile an international environmental lobby that

came to prominence at about the same time emphasized on long-term environmental and existence values of the forests than on direct use, and therefore championed protection and sustainable management (Brown and Schreckenberg 2001). The emphasis on community participation mainly arose from the country's adoption of the resolutions of the 1992 Earth Summit.

With the introduction, in the early 1990s, of community-based approaches in rural development and in forest management throughout the whole region, principles such as participation and the involvement of local communities are being progressively embraced by practitioners. As far as Cameroon is concerned, Nguingiri (1999) and Vabi *et al.* (2000) underline the fact that the promulgation, in 1994, of a new forestry legislation, focusing on the devolution of management responsibilities to local communities, has reinforced this participatory trend. This has an impact in the whole rural Cameroon (Oyono and Temple 2003).

CAMEROON'S MODEL FOREST PROJECT

In 2003, the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and its partners initiated the Model Forest Project in Cameroon as part of the International Model Forest Network (IMFN). The goal of the IMFN is to develop and support sustainable management of forests around the world, while taking into account the needs of local communities. In 2005, the government of Cameroon recognized the sites of Campo Ma'an and Dja et Mpomo as model forest sites and the initiative has received considerable attention in Cameroon and other African countries.

Model Forests (MF) are large multi-functional landscapes governed by a voluntary partnership representing all the important uses and values within that landscape. They constitute a novel and functional way to fully and constructively engage civil society, together with government, industry, indigenous groups, research organizations, and NGOs on a large landscape. Partners with an interest in the land and its many values come together to identify practical land and forest management problems and to find collaborative answers. In that process, they develop a shared vision of their future, establish representative, transparent and accountable governance structures, and commit resources to joint initiatives and credible, peer-reviewed research and development. The MF is, therefore, a platform of innovation where development and conservation interests can work with local stakeholders to make sustainable development a practical reality. What makes it stand out from other like-minded forest-based development initiatives is the comprehensiveness of its approach, its scale of operation, the level of policy it can affect, and the nature and range of partnerships it unites. There are about 42 Model Forests around the world.

Attributes

The minimum defining attributes of a model forest are as

follow (IMFNS 2000):

- Based upon an inclusive, voluntary partnership of stakeholders - from local to national levels.
- Commitment of all stakeholders in the partnership to Sustainable Forest Management (SFM).
- Large enough in scale to reflect environmental, social, and economic values of the landscape and for it to have potential to affect policy.
- A strategy and programme of action that reflects partner needs, values and priorities.
- A transparent and accountable governance structure that includes concrete efforts to give capacity and voice to non-traditional partners.
- Commitment to sharing and exchange (networking) so that innovations can be shared and their introduction accelerated at local, national and international levels.

The model forest's objectives

The MF's essential objective is to set-up, in the Campo Ma'an and Dja et Mpomo area, a multi-partner governance platform for poverty alleviation, conservation, and sustainable management of forest resources.

To achieve this objective, the partners have decided to "walk on their two feet", that is to:

1. Develop local capacities for transparent, robust, and equitable governance, and
2. Reduce poverty by optimizing the value of a wide range of forest products and environmental services.

The first sub-objective is currently being implemented through a management structure based on representative stakeholder platforms (women, baka-bagyeli pygmies, logging companies, private media, conservation groups, MPs and municipalities, etc.). Each platform is represented in a Board of 17 Directors (BOD) elected at the first annual constitutive assembly of the Model Forest in January 2006. The Board hires a small executive committee to coordinate activities on the ground and is assisted by technical and scientific committees in the analysis and collaborative monitoring of the projects and activities of the partnership. The purpose of this management structure is to ensure that every actor has a say in the use of the forested landscape and to facilitate the circulation of ideas and information. Strategic planning meetings, training workshops, learning-by-doing exercises, discussions, media and education activities have been used so far to support that organization.

The second sub-objective is based on project identification and analysis, on one hand, and resource mobilization and project implementation, on the other. It seeks to;

1. Identify valuable forest and wildlife resources and analyze options for integrated landscape management and the development of local businesses and eco-enterprises.
2. Develop funding and self-funding plans for local development based on decentralized logging taxes, other local forest revenues and the capacity to mobilize external resources.
3. Develop income-generating innovations in agricultural

production, agro-forestry, fisheries, timber and non-timber forest products, domestication, eco-enterprises, ecotourism, and environmental services in general.

4. Facilitate market access and economic partnerships between the private sector, local communities, municipalities and development or conservation projects.

Expected outcomes

It is expected that the MF partnership will help achieve the following outcomes:

At the local Level: Strong collaborative forest management and local participation, improved governance and livelihoods, reduced conflicts, and stronger capacity of the forest stakeholders to address development and conservation challenges;

At the national level: Shared information and knowledge through a learning network of model forests; replicable sets of good practices and innovation among network members; more responsive and more integrated forest, agriculture, and fiscal policies in forested landscapes;

At the international level: Shared information and knowledge through the International Model Forest Network and a regional MF network; more awareness of local answers to global environmental problems; improved exchange of knowledge and capacity; improved understanding of how forests can contribute to local livelihoods and to the MDG; more experience in capacity development and best forest practices.

Site level Partnership

The model forests of Campo-Ma'an and Dja et Mpomo cover some 1.5 million ha of forested landscapes. In both sites, the stakeholders are building large scale development and management platforms based on voluntary partnership and the respect of a range of interests and values (Jum *et al.* 2007).

The two model forests are established in the territories of ten municipalities (four in Dja et Mpomo and six in Campo-Ma'an). Together, they include five logging companies (two in Campo and three in Dja), two industrial agro-plantations (rubber and oil palm) in Campo, a national park (Campo-Ma'an) and a Reserve of the Biosphere (Dja). Two local NGO Networks (ROLD and ROCAME), with a dozen NGOs in each site, and several dozens community forests (about 75 established or seeking recognition in the two sites) are active in the sites. Representatives and traditional chiefs of a wide range of Bantu, Baka and Bagyeli pygmy communities are also actively involved in the two sites, as well as women platforms (one in each site), cooperatives (GECEC-Dja et Mpomo), and the GEOVIC mining company in Dja and Mpomo.

In addition to the broad support of government institutions (MINFOF, MINEP, IRAD and the Territorial Administration

of the South and East Provinces), a number of publicly or privately funded institutions have joined the Model Forests partnership, thus demonstrating their national credibility and relevance to the rural development challenge in Cameroon. Such institutions include FEICOM (Council or Municipal Development Fund), MEAO (the Evaluation, Planning and Management Mission for the Ocean Division in Kribi), the Memve'ele Dam Socioeconomic Project in the Campo-Ma'an area, FEDEC (the Environment and Development Fund created by GoC and the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline/oil consortium), PNDP (the National Program of Participatory Development) and ECOFAC (the EU-funded regional environment program) in the Dja. The Dutch facilitation NGO, SNV, has committed support to the MF process in both sites, while WWF, also present in both sites, has promised a greater involvement in the future.

CIFOR and the International Model Forest Network Secretariat (IMFNS), which initiated the process in 2003, in partnership with the Government of Cameroon (MINEF/MINFOF), COMIFAC, CIDA (Cameroon Office), FAO, and IUCN-CEFDHAC, have maintained a strong support to the Cameroon Model Forests, including cross-site, regional, and international facilitation, as well as research, monitoring, and action-research in the field.

Site description

Dja and Mpomo Model Forest

The Model Forest is almost 800 000 hectares in size and spreads across four municipalities in East Province. It contains a portion of the Dja Biosphere Reserve, a World Heritage Site and borders the Nki National Park that has been proposed for inclusion in the Model Forest. Approximately 150 villages are located in the area with a total population estimate of between 25,000 to 32,200 people, comprised of five main ethnic groups. Groups of Baka Pygmies can be found in the site living together with Bantou communities. Three international logging companies and their national counterparts have active forest concessions in the area, in addition, GEOVIC-Cameroon, a mining company, is also starting to operate. The site also contains 45 community forests and one council forest. The region is remote but road and telephone connections to the capital are improving. Rural communities subsist mainly on agriculture, hunting and fishing but are increasing their use of wood and non-wood forest products.

Campo Ma'an Model Forest

The Model Forest is approximately 770 000 hectares in size and located in South Province and is known for its striking biological diversity. The territory stretches across six municipalities, includes a national park, large tracts of agro-forests and five forest management units where harvesting is taking place, including the activity of two large industrial forest enterprises. Palm and oil plantations are also present as are a number of community forests. The Model Forest area has a total population of 60 000 located in 160 villages, six of which are the Bagyeli Pygmies. Cocoa and subsistence

farming are dominant activities in rural areas. The Model Forest area is adjacent to the coastal city of Kribi, which is easy to access, and it also includes a coastal strip with potential for tourism development. The Campo Ma'an area has a rich and exceptional plant and animal biodiversity; it is marked by a history of conflicts related to its management and the sharing of benefits, including the costs and benefits of conservation in the national park.

The problem

There is a recent history of networking in Cameroon that promotes the sharing of experiences and allows members to work cooperatively, reconcile sustainable use and forest conservation with the development needs of local populations, and build institutional and organizational capacities. But efforts have been disjointed and results poor. According to Jum *et al.* (2007), the contextual flexibility of the networking concept, as put forth by the IMFN, recently motivated the government of Cameroon, to support the creation of two model forests, Dja et Mpomo and Campo Ma'an, and to join the International Network.

The need to overcome the many conflicts between forest actors is a prerequisite for establishing frameworks for good governance, innovation, and equitable use of, and benefits from, forest resources and revenues. Reforms in Cameroon have led to the establishment of land use and management plans for logging concessions, protected areas, agro-plantations and community and council forests. Unfortunately, the functional link between these various forest management units is weak, which has contributed to the fragmentation of local landscapes upon which sustainable development policies should be based. The establishment of model forests in Cameroon was designed to help address these problems (Jum *et al.* 2007). They constitute a coherent network at the global scale for experimenting with sustainable management principles on the basis of voluntary partnerships.

Pilot Approach

The model forest initiative in the Congo Basin was initiated by CIFOR and the IMFNS in close collaboration with key regional and national institutions (Jum *et al.* 2007). This was facilitated by three converging factors:

1. The coming of age of forest reforms in Cameroon and the Congo Basin.
2. Scientific lessons drawn from a range of researches conducted over the last decade by CIFOR on Criteria and Indicators of SFM, decentralization, adaptive collaborative management of forests and governance of multi-stakeholders landscapes;
3. The significant expansion of the International Model Forests Network (IMFN) since its creation in 1994, particularly in the past five years.

This convergence was at the basis of the discussions initiated by CIFOR with the Secretariat of the Model Forest Network (IMFNS) at the end of 2002. After an initial phase of stakeholder consultation and conceptual adaptation, the

model forests initiative for the Congo Basin was launched in March 2004 by a consortium chaired by Cameroon and including COMIFAC, IUCN, FAO, CIDA, the IMFNS and CIFOR. This consortium met throughout 2004 to define an approach and the conditions and criteria for site selection. Its first decision was to develop a pilot approach for the region, with Cameroon as the first pilot country. In order to foster real rather than token grassroots ownership of the MF process, it also decided to launch a competitive site selection process (Jum *et al.* 2007). Ten forest sites were invited to a workshop to review and amend the selection criteria. The sites' representatives, then, went back to their constituencies to garner support and organize in order to win the competition. Out of this process, the three sites that presented the best dossiers were visited in the field, noted and ranked by a technical evaluation committee, whose recommendations were later endorsed by the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF formerly MINEF). Campo-Ma'an came top in the evaluation very closely followed by Dja and Mpomo. Both sites were designated in August 2005 by the Government of Cameroon for membership into the IMFNS. CIFOR was the lead facilitator of that overall process, and later extended this facilitation to the pilot sites. It is expected that the two pilot model forests will form the embryo of a learning network that will establish itself in Cameroon before expanding to other Congo basin countries.

Site level approach

By early 2005, the team had initiated contacts with site actors in the Dja et Mpomo and Campo-Ma'an by developing a common vision of the situation using divergent techniques such as brainstorming and discussions with a wide range of stakeholders.

Fieldwork and secondary data were collected at different intervals between 2005 and 2006 involving interviews with key informants from the NGOs, municipalities, economic operators, forest administration, and local communities. A series of multi-stakeholder visioning and planning workshops attended by representatives of all stakeholder groups were convened in the two sites in order to gain an understanding of problems.

Participatory Action Plan

One of the outcomes of the visioning and planning workshops was that site actors committed themselves to develop jointly a Participatory Action Plan (PAP) as a way forward. The key features of this PAP are: (i) each category of stakeholders works separately to identify and rank their problems regarding natural resources management. Later, all stakeholder groups come together to jointly agree on their priority problems, (ii) the stakeholder groups analyze separately possible solutions and their impacts before meeting in a plenary to share their analysis and form a consensus on win-win solutions and actions, and (iii) the participants prepare in more detail an action plan for natural resources management.

The participatory action plan is designed to encourage participants to express their views, while avoiding a process that is dominated by locally-powerful and vocal people,

and to develop a shared framework of understanding about resource management. PAP focuses on problems needs and potential solutions that are shared, and the differences and similarities in views of stakeholder groups over them.

POLICY DIMENSION

The MF initiative in this area has been woven into the wider policies of the Congo Basin region. It covers major policy themes related to the forest policy reforms of the 1990s and early 2000 in the region and is linked to the COMIFAC Convergence Plan. COMIFAC was part of the initiative from the beginning, participating in its design, as well as in the selection of the Cameroon pilot sites through a national competition. COMIFAC and MINFOF were decisive in the decision to adopt a pilot approach in Cameroon, with the aim of learning from the experience for later extension to other countries of the Congo Basin. CIDA is in the process to support this pilot phase and the subsequent development of a regional learning network. This is a valuable recognition and strengthening of the approach taken in March 2004 by the regional consortium on Model Forests (which included FAO, IUCN/CEFDHAC, and CIDA, in addition to COMIFAC, MINFOF, CIFOR, and the IMFNS). Another important regional link is with the CBFP (Congo Basin Forest Partnership) landscapes, which could learn from the approach taken by the IMFN for building multi-stakeholder landscapes in Cameroon.

Finally, significant policy strength of the MF initiative derives from the close association of national policy-makers in the design and conduct of this process. MINEF, then MINFOF, was a leader in the initiative and its high level cadres have advocated for it through three successive ministers. The initiative received direct support from the Prime Minister of Cameroon (2005). The Government of Cameroon addressed three correspondences to the IMFNS to manifest the interest of the Cameroon government for the MF process (2004) and to request formal Cameroon membership into the IMFN (2005) (both under the cover of CIFOR). "Local policy-makers" and local actors (mayors, governors, community leaders, women, NGOs, private concessionaires, forest department officers, etc.) are the heart and soul of the process, as documented previously. The two Cameroon pilot MFs cover nearly 800 000 ha each and provide an opportunity for drawing lessons useful to all components of the national forestry program (FESP).

Global reach

With the rapid growth of the International Model Forest Network over the last seven years (the network doubled its membership between 2000 and 2005) and the deliberations of the MF Global Forum in Costa Rica (Nov 2005) revealed a new awareness of the network's potential for delivering, demonstrating and disseminating a whole range of local solutions to global environmental problems. The IMFN is now reorganizing to rise to the challenge and is seeking

strategic partnerships with organizations, which are uniquely positioned to advise it on global issues and to engage in joint research over local to global issues. This is also an opportunity for organizations, which can forge a strategic alliance that will give it access to a wide range of sites, conditions and data as well as a global network from which it can learn and through which it can disseminate its results. The following statement from the IMFNS' introductory note to the first preparatory meeting of the International Networking Committee (INC) summarizes the IMFNS thinking (and questions) at this stage.

“The 42 [now 43] landscapes that currently make up the IMFN represent an extraordinary potential to accelerate innovation, to demonstrate workable approaches to SFM convincingly to policy makers, and to undertake globally significant research, development, and analytical work. Each site has a powerful (or potentially powerful) partnership base composed of researchers, governments, industry, citizens, land owners, NGOs and many others. Multiplying this type of partnership base operating on very large scales across the globe [is a new challenge] and we have to draw the conclusion that there is significant potential to be gained by coordinating more efficiently some activities. As we know, this does not happen spontaneously, organically or inexpensively. We need deliberate strategies, concrete goals, and appropriate tools and mechanisms. The key question, therefore, is: how can we realize and maximize this potential as a network of sites?”

This global network constitutes a privileged site for sharing local lessons globally and for out-scaling local solutions that work.

Model forest, national and sub-regional forestry programmes

In the last ten years the countries of the Congo basin have undertaken a wide range of very significant institutional reforms on forests and environmental management. Since 1996 these national efforts have been coordinated at the sub-regional level by the Conference of Ministers in Charge of Forests in Central Africa (COMIFAC), which recently became the Central African Forests Commission. One of the achievements of this coordination is the Brazzaville Treaty of 2005, which is the first regional convention of this kind at the international level; its operational scope is defined by a sub-regional Convergence Plan. The action of COMIFAC is backed by the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), launched in September 2002 after the summit at Johannesburg on sustainable development with key partners and donors in the region. Despite this significant institutional progress there are still persistent problems of poverty, lack of equitable access to resources and degradation of environmental services and resources. Through a typical Model Forest Partnership approach, stakeholders come together to set priorities, assess alternatives, and demonstrate

innovative approaches to sustainable landscape management and use that are locally acceptable and nationally relevant. The process focuses on achieving sustainable development in tangible ways from field to the policy levels.

The Forest and Environment Sector Programme (FESP) is a national forestry programme within the socio-political and cultural context of Cameroon. The FESP, which became operation in 2004, is the primary instrument for the implementation of the new Cameroon forestry policy and the first reaction to the multiple operational needs of the 1994 forestry reforms. This program can be seen, and incorporated, as a ‘control panel’ for all the actors involved in the management of Cameroon forest resources. Though the national basis of the FESP is well established, local management aimed at ensuring effective contributions of actors towards the goals of ecological, economic and social sustainability are not obvious. The partnership and landscape-level approach upon which Model Forests is based will provide an appropriate framework for sharing experiences and for local capacity building for sustainable development.

As illustrated by Table 1, the Model Forest project will contribute to the six axes of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan and the five components of FESP by providing an appropriate framework for drawing lessons useful to all the components of FESP and the six axes of the convergence plan.

Model forest and Millennium Development Goals

The Model Forest approach is also directly supportive of the Millennium Development Goals. Because Model Forest Partnerships themselves determine their priorities within the context of sustainability, Model Forests particularly in developing countries such as Cameroon consistently place issues of governance and poverty alleviation at the top of their lists, tackling these concerns in creative, effective, and collaborative ways. As such they directly address the first Goal to *eradicate extreme poverty and hunger*. Moreover, they are also active in promoting gender equality and empowerment (Goal 3 *Promote gender equality and empower women*), ensuring environmental sustainability (Goal 7 *Ensure environmental sustainability*), and developing a global partnership for development (Goal 8 *Develop a global partnership for development*) through the IMFN.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

The following are some of the accomplishments that have been achieved since these two sites were established in 2005:

- Establishment of the two sites as legal entities.
- Establishment of a governance structure, including the establishment of a Board of Trustees in both sites.
- Strategic planning processes are underway.
- Strategies to identify local development options are

TABLE 1 *Model forest contributions to national and sub-regional forestry programmes*

Convergence Plan	FESP	Model Forests Contributions
Knowledge of Natural resources and ecosystems (axis A)	Knowledge of the resource and ecological monitoring (objective 1)	Science, Technology and Best Practice (level 3000); M&E
Biodiversity Conservation (axis B)	Biodiversity conservation and valorization of faunal products (objective 3) Environmental Management of production forests (objective 5)	Local governance and partnership(1000); Sustainable Rural Development (2000); Science, Technology and Best Practice (3000)
Increase value of Natural resources (axis C) and Develop alternative to the pressure on Natural resources (Axis F)	Production forest management in permanent forest domain and valorization of forest products (objective 2)	Sustainable Rural Development (2000)
Promote participation of all actors and reduce poverty (axis D)	community management of forests and faunal resources (objective 4)	Local governance and partnership (1000)
Strengthen stakeholder collaboration, including regional cooperation, research and institutional and regulatory frameworks (axis E)	[Institutional strengthening, training and research (former objective 5 of FESP)]	Capacity building, communication and networking (4000); Cameroon and Congo Basin Network Development (5000)

in process.

- Local partners have increased ability to establish and maintain effective broad-based partnerships.
- Strategies to improve and plan site communications, visioning and awareness are in place and being implemented.
- Wide-spread media outreach has been established.
- Agreements (MoU) with some MF partners established.
- MF membership, grassroots governance rules and mechanisms are in place.
- MF platforms established (e.g. women's platform and platform of local NGOs), others being initiated (e.g. Bagyeli-pygmyies and Baka-pygmyies).

PROPOSED FUTURE STRATEGY

The development of a Model Forest Programme in Cameroon is based on the establishment of a Model Forest Network in the Congo Basin with an initial two pilot sites in Cameroon. There are three main phases for the establishment of the Model Forest Network:

- **2000-05:** Policy preparation, site selection and development of basic partnership with local stakeholders.
- **2006-08:** Setting up of governance structures, operational projects and sustainable, autonomous initiatives. Strengthening local involvement of stakeholders beyond administrative units.
- **2008-09 (and beyond):** Consolidation and extension – expansion of development projects and increased sustainable management of local forest resources.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

A Model Forest Planning and Follow-up Committee was established in March 2004 with representatives from seven institutions (MINEF, CIFOR, IMFNS, COMIFAC, CIDA, FAO and IUCN / CEFDHAC). One of its first orientation decisions was to give priority to the establishment of a Model Forest in Cameroon that would serve as a pilot demonstration site for the Congo Basin region. Once established, the Committee worked as a team to make the conceptual development recommended by the first 2003 model forest workshop in Nkolbisson and to plan the operational steps of the model forest process in Cameroon. All seven institutions participated actively and professionally in this process:

- The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MINEF) provided leadership and chaired all meetings of the Planning Committee, as well as the field initiative to inform local stakeholders, with CIFOR acting as facilitator.
- In April 2004, the Minister of Environment and Forestry officially expressed the interest of the Government of Cameroon in developing model forests in Cameroon to the IMFNS.
- High level political meetings, contacts and discussion with key Cameroon government members (Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, Minister Delegate for the Environment, Minister of Research and Innovation and Minister of Territorial Administration) continued for the remaining of 2004.
- In November 2005, the Cameroon government (through the ministry of Forestry and Wildlife) was represented at the IMFN Global Forum held in Costa Rica.
- A change of government at the end of 2004 delayed the process of choosing a site, but CIFOR and the local stakeholders pressed ahead by holding meetings

and workshops in potential pilot sites in Campo-Ma'an and Dja and Mpomo.

- In June 2005, high-level political meetings continued at the Prime Minister level with the visit of CIFOR's Assistant Director General to the Prime Minister who expressed his support for the model forest approach.
- In August 2005, the newly appointed Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, who had not previously met with CIFOR, raised many questions on the MF process in order to make up his mind. The key result of the meeting was the Minister's decision to support the sites selected before he took office and to write an official admission request to IMFNS on behalf of the Government of Cameroon. Higher officials of the Ministry, including the Director of Cooperation and Projects, participated in the meeting and showed their knowledge of the MF concept and process by supplying themselves many of the answers sought by the minister.
- In August 2005, the Government decided to choose both sites rather than just one. The Minister of Environment and Forestry requested that IMFNS accept Cameroon as a member of the IMFN.

The Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife has contributed enormously in providing technical advice, guidance and support to project planning activities. It is hoped that they will play a key role in supporting the extension of the concept to other regions in the Congo Basin.

It is Cameroon's experience that government alone cannot map the route to sustainable forest management. Sustainable forest management is built from the ground up, with cross-sectoral, local participation and this is the advantage of the current model forest process.

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ACRONYMS

CEFDHAC	Conference on central African Moist Forest Ecosystem
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency (Cameroon country office)
CIFOR	Center for International forestry Research
COMIFAC	Central African Forests Commission.
ECOFAC	Central Africa Forest Ecosystem
FAO	Food and Agricultural organization
FEDEC	Environment and Development Foundation for Cameroon (created by Government of Cameroon and the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline/oil consortium)
FEICOM	Council or Municipal development Fund
IDRC	International Development Research Center (Canada)
IRAD	National Agriculture Institute for Development
IMFN	International Model forest Network
IMFNS	International Model Forest Network

	Secretariat
IUCN	World conservation Union
MEAO	Evaluation, Planning and Management Mission for the Ocean Division in Kribi, Cameroon
MINEF	Ministry of Environment and Forestry (Former Ministry)
MINEP	Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature
MINFOF	Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (present Ministry)
PNDP	National Program of Participatory Development
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature