

Project Update: May 2006

Another day to Atome, the fun of the rugged access road, the natural vegetation and whispers of the birds, the day was all about benefit-sharing between the local people and conservation. Gender issues were at the priority. Women were tasked on their role in conservation and livelihood activities. Through the workshop, the women got to know that several opportunities existed for developing micro-enterprise activities with support from rural banks through the local District Assembly (the main government authority at the district level). Improving and adding value to local craft and curio as well as having a true cultural village were largely deliberated and how best tourists and conservation organisations could be attracted to the area. The workshop further scored another point for bringing to bare the development of protocols for tourists on resource access and use, human and intellectual property abuse.

Another week in the community was accompanied by the extreme hospitality of the people and the monkeys. There were meetings on improving the sanctuary and wildlife habitat where it was revealed that the local people were keen on expanding the habitat of the monkeys. Almost all landowners having land bordering the reserve were willing to commit their lands provided there was some compensation (not to the actual value of the land). Bananas have been planted along some of the boundaries of the sanctuary to supplement future food needs of the monkeys and that more suckers will be nursed locally to cut down the cost of transportation. As part of the awareness component of our project, appropriate naming and description of existing trails in the sanctuary was being considered as a value addition activity. The community will make the final decision on what they want done. A further discussion on establishing a foundation for the sanctuary based on gifts, souvenirs and some quota of tourist proceeds have been welcomed by all parties. This is because it will help support the education of talented young people with no access to financial support and community projects.



On the partnership front, a married couple from the USA have communicated with us on their willingness to support the sanctuary. In the meantime, they are paying allowances to two community volunteers to nurse 4000 trees that they raised earlier in the year whilst visiting the sanctuary. They also suggested that as part of the awareness creation portfolio, every tourist or visitor to the sanctuary will be asked to plant a tree which we support. On research, it was noted that there is basically no scientific information on the resources. The custodians of the sanctuary were educated on the role of research and links with conservation, tourism and livelihoods which they welcomed. On the basis of this, we have invited two researchers from the University of Florida, USA this June - August to undertake various forms of surveys (both social and biological), and approved by the local people. The team from Florida will fund their trip, living with the local people and employing a few of them for the duration of their stay. A research output will be produced for this project, the community and our major hosts, the Community Resources Periscope.

It was also revealed that the local people providing the sanctuary tour services had no skill and end up not earning any income but depending only on gifts from tourists. A meeting with opinion leaders reveal that this constitutes threats to important wild flora and fauna in the reserve as tourists and research

workers can easily connive with their guides to expropriate such resources. This implies that there is the need to provide skilled training on the identification of biodiversity and also the history of the people in relation to the sanctuary and the region as a whole. We welcome funding in this aspect in addition to sanctuary related community projects being undertaken by the local people to perpetuate the existence of the sanctuary. Below left: A community workshop gathering (project leader arrowed light blue, sanctuary custodian arrowed red, recording arrowed white). Right: What the project has greatly achieved for encouraging women participation and also getting them to contribute.