

Project Update: January 2015

I arrived in Calabar on the 7th January 2015 and travelled to Iko Esai Community Forests near Calabar in Cross River State on the 8th. I carried out a pilot study with my field assistant Enobong Emmanuel on that day. Enobong is a graduate of the biological sciences specialising in botany from the University of Calabar, Nigeria. He is a devout member of the The Apostolic Church and his connections in that faith group were instrumental in our successful intercourse with the inhabitants and faith leaders of Iko Esai Community.

We started our survey from the 9th to 11th January 2015. We surveyed 30 respondents representing 30 housing units in one in every three housing units out of a total of an estimated 150 houses. The majority of the inhabitants of the community are Christians with levels of about 95%. Hunting and bushmeat consumption are highly prevalent in this community. All respondents (n=30) confirmed they ate bushmeat and a majority agreed that if their religious leaders asked them to stop/reduce consumption of bushmeat they would do so. Purposive sampling of three faith leaders of the Presbyterian, The Apostolic Church and Deliverance Tower of Jehovah all confirmed they would incorporate conservation messages in their faith messages when prompted to do so. Ancillary aspects of the study captured data on: way of obtaining bushmeat, hunting and cultural practices, consumption of bushmeat in comparison to other alternative sources of meat, perception about bushmeat consumption.

I would note that the actual study was quite different from the proposal in some respects. For instance, while we envisaged surveying communities around protected areas, we surveyed only one community which manages a community forest adjacent to a protected area and popular for bushmeat consumption and hunting with majority Christians. This is exactly what we wanted for a case study. And Iko Esai Community fitted our proposal in that regard. While we expected our survey according to the proposal to have lasted 1 month, it lasted only 4 days.

We couldn't get the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) as proposed although I had email exchanges with Andrew Dunn of the WCS prior to coming to Calabar. But we realised we didn't even need their help in the main. We however, paid a courtesy visit to CERCOPAN Office in the Calabar metropolis and met with the Education Officer Bassey Owai (a photo of the meeting is attached).

Modifications were made to the budget to adjust to current realities such as reduced number of days in the field, lesser number of field personnel (only two – I and Enobong Emmanuel). Co-researcher Dr Babalola Folaranmi helped with the project development and will contribute to data analysis. We were therefore left with an excess of £2,100. I seek your advice on what to do with this.

We will be compiling results and analysing our data in the next 2 months at most and should be ready on or before late March 2015.

Our survey revealed that a faith-based conservation workshop would not be sufficient, though would likely be very effective and well fitting for the Iko Esai community. For the

workshop to work, it would have to be complemented with sustainable development projects to aid the faith community and inhabitants to adhere to conservation values and action. Many respondents spoke about alternative livelihoods and alternative sources of meat as potential solutions.

