



**NATURE CAMEROON
(NGO)**

**A Local Conservation
flagship initiative**



A Community Model



Our donor

**FINAL REPORT TO THE
RUFFORD SMALL GRANTS FOR NATURE CONSERVATION
(RSG)**

**RAINFOREST AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION
THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN BANYANG
MBO FOREST, SOUTH WEST CAMEROON**

***Support to the sustainable community management of the Banyang-Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary
in Cameroon (Project No35 11 06)***

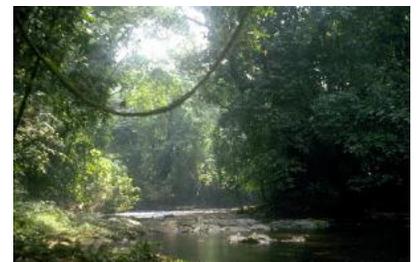
May 2007 – May 2008



Research field station in the forest



**Government Primary School
Ebanut, Bangem District
(Southern part of Sanctuary)**



The rich forest and rivers

**Dominic Alekeh NGWESSE
Chief Executive Officer**

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i Acknowledgement

We would like to use this medium to sincerely acknowledge the contributions gathered from all those individuals and institutions that took part in one way or the other in supporting the implementation of the Rufford Small Grants Foundation offered to Nature Cameroon for implementation of conservation activities in the Banyang-Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary. Here, we think most especially of the members of the Clan Forest Councils of the Banyang-Mbo communities, the participating schools in Nguti, and Ebamut, authorities of the Wildlife Sanctuary, notably the Conservator, the Provincial Chief of Wildlife and the Chief of Forestry and Wildlife Posts of Elumba and Nguti respectively. Our field team is not left out for their dedication and assiduity that went an extra mile in the implementation of conservation measures and policy leading to the protection of the wildlife sanctuary and the resources therein.

Above all, our donor; Rufford Small Grants Foundation is highly appreciated for giving us this unique opportunity to get closer to the communities and actively involve them in the management of their forest and the wildlife resources.

ii Summary of Report

Support to the sustainable community management of the Banyang-Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary in Cameroon (Project No.RSG 35 11 06) was the project proposal submitted to the Rufford Small Grants Foundation by Nature Cameroon, a local community based conservation initiative.

The Banyang-Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary as our focus is a species rich Low Land Guinean Forest under protection by the Cameroon Forestry and Wildlife law. It was the first sanctuary created in Cameroon and reserved special status to serve as a model sanctuary in Cameroon governments strives to protect its forests and wildlife resources. Despite this, this sanctuary faces threats from both over-hunting/illegal hunting by insiders (those living in and around the forest reserve) and outsiders. Banyang-Mbo is an important site identified by the Regional Strategic Action Plan in South West. This Province is endowed with a wide variety of wildlife species (large mammals/primates, birds, reptiles, insects etc) most of which are endangered. Because of the anthropogenic impact to this wildlife in surrounding forest massifs, there tend to seek refuge in Government created protected areas (Korup, Banyang-Mbo, Takamanda, Mt. Cameroon, Bakossi National Park, etc), nevertheless, there is still heavy human impact to these wildlife resources in state owned reserves, thus the need to amplify serious protective measures for conservation to be achieved.

This project aimed at:

- Building the capacity of the Clan Forest Council to actively engage in the sustainable management of their forest – i.e. enhancing the performance and management capacity of local key actors.
- Empower clan councils by registering them as common initiative groups enabling them to seek further training, capacity building and funding as independent fully recognized associations to conduct activities towards protection of their forest.

The ministries of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) and Environment and Nature Protection (MINEP) will learn from this experience and be able to replicate this initiative in other sites as well as inform policy/decision makers. If implemented, hunting and other unsustainable activities in the sanctuary will be reduced through joint community and government control and the local communities will be motivated to conserve the sanctuary

A total of £4,992 was granted by the Rufford Small Grants Foundation at the exchange of 4,652,180 Francs CFA whereas the total expenditure incurred for field activities stood at 4,792,500 CFA francs showing an extra expenditure covered by Nature Cameroon with satisfaction. This report gives a bird eye view of the state of the forest in Cameroon, especially the illegal killing of the protected species as well as the difficulties faced by the riparian communities, other stakeholders and the Government of Cameroon for the integral protection of the ecological systems.

Within the context of constraints, we acknowledge our weaknesses in the extension of the project beyond the expected time frame due largely because of the Municipal and Parliamentary elections in July-August 2007 that could not permit us move into the field for fear of the unknown. We were further constraint by the death of the kid sister to the Team Leader, Dominic Ngwesse as well as our poor mastery of forwarding field reports following the Rufford format which was later overcome. That notwithstanding, we can not thank our donors enough for their patience and understanding through out the implementation of the project.

As a way forward, we look for further cooperation ties with the Rufford Small Grants Foundation towards a program approach to be instituted by Nature Cameroon at Banyang-Mbo, so that local communities can be effectively empowered to co-manage protected areas in tropical forested Africa. Further more, we look forward to seeing the Rufford staff visit us for evaluation and plan of action for implementation of the second and possible third grants. By so doing, Rufford would have had a greater impact in playing a pivotal role in conservation and development in Cameroon. As a matter of fact, the Mayor of Nguti Council and the Provincial Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife for the South West are poised to support our initiative in order to achieve the co-management model at Banyang-Mbo.

I. INTRODUCTION

Support to the Sustainable Community Management of the Banyang-Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary in South West Cameroon, was a project proposal submitted by Nature Cameroon, a local flagship conservation organization in Cameroon, to the Rufford Small Grant in UK worth £4,992. This was to support a dynamic group of young Cameroonian conservation technicians in their efforts to empower themselves and their local communities to take the lead in conservation implementation at grass root level in their country. The support covered the following areas of activities:

- Environmental Conservation Education campaign
- Capacity building and registration of 7 Clan forest councils
- Needs assessment of 8 direct impact villages.

The funding got to Nature Cameroon in May 2007 and the project was executed from May 2007 to April 2008. Within the context of the three broad areas of our attention (environmental conservation education, capacity building of clan forest councils and needs assessment), surfaced Village/community meetings, Forest Leadership workshops Registration of clan Forest councils, Environmental Education Lectures in schools, Village needs assessment; Monitoring & Evaluation and Final program evaluation

1.1 BACKGROUND OF PROJECT/JUSTIFICATION

The Banyang-Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary is a species rich Low Land Guinean Forest under protection by the Cameroon Forestry and Wildlife law. It was the first sanctuary created in Cameroon and reserved special status to serve as a model sanctuary in Cameroon governments strives to protect its forests and wildlife resources. Despite this, this sanctuary faces threats from both over-hunting/illegal hunting by insiders (those living in and around the forest reserve) and outsiders. Banyang-Mbo is an important site identified by the Regional Strategic Action Plan in South West Cameroon for the protection of ecological systems in Cameroon. Considering the importance of this rich biodiversity hotspot, there was a need for more hands on desk activities to keep the riparian communities actively involved in the total protection of the forest. The South West Province of Cameroon is endowed with a wide variety of wildlife species (large mammals/primates, birds, reptiles, insects etc) most of which are endangered. Because of the anthropogenic impact to this wildlife in surrounding forest massifs, there tend to seek refuge in Government created protected areas (Korup, Banyang-Mbo, Takamanda, Mt. Cameroon, Bakossi National Park, etc). nevertheless, there is still heavy human impact to these wildlife resources in state owned reserves, thus the need to amplify serious protective measures for conservation to be achieved.

This project aimed at:

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The ministries of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) and Environment and Nature Protection (MINEP) will learn from this experience and be able to replicate this initiative in other sites as well as inform policy/decision makers. If implemented, hunting and other unsustainable activities in the sanctuary will be reduced through joint community and government control and the local communities will be motivated to conserve the sanctuary resources.

1.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The following objectives were:

1. To continue sensitization and awareness raising on the protection of the forest and its biological resources
2. To build capacities of local communities in order to enable them manage the forest sustainably through recognition of the seven main clan forest councils adjacent to the wildlife sanctuary
3. To create effective autonomous institutions capable of implementing conservation and sustainable development activities.
4. To train informed conservation and would be policy and decision makers.
5. To determine what alternative sustainable livelihood development interventions to be carried out.
6. To monitor progress, learn lessons and replicate results in other sites.
7. To assess impact of the project and produce final reports, account to the donor and other stakeholders.

II. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation Team

Upon receipt of funds from Rufford Small Grants Foundation, strategic plans in order to enable Nature Cameroon realize the objectives of the project as proposed to our donor were in place. Within this framework, the following was our plan of operation put in place by Dominic Ngwesse, Achuo Fobia, Clara Ayompe, Mbou Njume Marie-Clare, Epie Felix Ekabe and Mr. Itte Jaya Rao (Volunteer from VSO Cameroon Program)

S/N	Activity	Requirements
01a	Nature Cameroon planning meeting	Lunch
01b	Discuss the implementation plan/budget	Transport, allowances, lunch, communication
02	Mobilization of resources	Transport, allowances, communication
03	Lower Mbo Clan Forest Council Meeting Needs assessment Environmental Education	Transport, field allowances, stationery, field provisions, meeting receptions
04	Ndifoaw/Barah Clan Forest Council Tinto/Mbari clan Forest Meeting Needs Assessment, Environmental Education workshop	Transport, field allowances, Stationery, field provisions, Communication, lodging, Meeting reception
05	Nguti/Ntale Clan Forest meeting, Ngemengoe Clan forest council meeting, Needs assessment New Konye, Mungo Ndor, Bombe Konye and Ntale Environmental Education Workshop	Transport, field allowances, Stationery, field provisions, Communication, meeting Refreshments
06	Ebamut clan forest council meeting Banyu clan forest council meeting Needs assessments Ediengoh/Nzorbi Environmental Education	Transport, field allowances, Field provisions, lodging, Communication
07	Reporting, accounting/submission	Assembly and harmonizing materials, scanning photos, Production and binding, Posting.

2.1 ACHIEVEMENTS/OUTCOMES

The following were some achievements/outcomes

2.1.1 Village/Community Meetings

All the communities mentioned in the implementation plan were reached by the field team and meetings held made very valuable revelations that would set the ball rolling for the way forward for conservation within integration and empowerment context of the local communities in forest resources management.

2.1.2 Forest Leadership Workshop

This took the form of the clan forest council meetings with the view of developing the background information required for the formal recognition of the clan forest councils as the representatives of the riparian communities adjacent to the wildlife sanctuary. The seven clan forest councils are in place, recognized by the local administration and also a part of Nature Cameroon through whom we would be able to reach the communities for livelihoods development initiatives.

2.1.3 Environmental Education Lectures in Schools

The following schools were reached with very far reaching successes: Government School Ebamut, Government High School Nguti, Government School Nguti, Catholic School Nguti, Government School Ntale, and Government Technical College Nguti. More attention was paid to these schools due to high incidences of elephant killing in the wildlife sanctuary within these villages that are the gateway into the reserve forest as well as river poisoning for fish using dynamites and toxic chemicals such as "gamalin 40". On the whole, a total of **2, 275 students and pupils** were reached out to with valuable environmental conservation education lectures on how to protect the forest and its biological resources. A total of **517 teachers** were also reached during the schools visit and

workshops. During the schools visit, the following were the salient environmental issues raised by the schools that would form part of our way forward in this initiative:

- Lack of weather stations in schools for statistics
- Lack of trees to check erosion, especially in Ebamut which lies on a steep hill
- Lack of school infrastructure for a conducive learning environment
- Poor sanitation
- Poor soil fertility for cultivation

2.1.4 Group work results from the Environmental Education Workshops

The following summary was an outcome of the environmental conservation education workshops held using the SWOT analysis:

2.1.4.1 Strengths

- Government policies, e.g. the inclusion of EE studies in the school curriculum
- The availability of trained staff to be maintained with the Banyang Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary (BMWS)
- Awareness of communities around the sanctuary about Nature Cameroon's activities

2.1.4.2 Weaknesses

- Poor teaching methodology
- No good defined teaching program adapted to the sanctuary area
- Inadequate teaching materials for demonstration
- High illiteracy rate within the BMWS settlements

2.1.4.3 Opportunities

- Availability of donor organizations
- Creation of job opportunities

2.1.4.4 Threats

- Extinction of endemic species
- Pollution of rivers

2.2 CONSTRAINTS AFFECTING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

- Lack of personnel
- Lack of finance
- Lack of donor organizations much concerned with funding purely education programmes
- Poor relationship with school authorities and parents
- Poor access to the Banyang-Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary hinterlands communities
- Ignorance
- High level of illiteracy, especially in the hinterlands of the sanctuary

2.2.1 Proposed solutions

- Organize workshops which will create a meeting forum between stakeholders and the communities in building trust and confidence
- The need for more trained personnel
- Create job opportunities and educate farmers on new farming techniques
- Need for government assistance both financially and materially
- Need to disenclave communities living in and around the BMWS

2.2.2 Why EE in schools adjacent Banyang-Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary is needed

- Awareness raising
- To enforce biodiversity conservation culture
- Security for a healthy generation in terms of resources that provide a source of livelihood
- Ensuring a good communication channel is built up for sustainable natural resources management
- Train future environmental leaders.

2.2.3 The role to be played by Schools in reversing Environmental degradation

- By setting up tree nurseries in schools
- Carrying out afforestation
- Opening up school orchards/farms
- Forming environmental conservation education clubs
- Strengthening existing conservation education clubs in schools
- Enforcing the teaching of Environmental Education in schools through various methods

2.2.4 Village Needs Assessment

Eight villages were assessed and one out of the 8 benefited from the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) Cameroon's program gesture of facilitating the creation of a Producers Cooperative Society limited to enable its inhabitants market their local products at good market prices and improve upon the lives of its members.

2.2.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

The benchmark of the project is being monitored from the day of planning for implementation and lessons learnt form a part of our way forward for the next project

2.3 FINANCIAL ANALYSIS (Summary of expenditure)

S/N	Activity	Costs (FCFA)
01	Field logistics to staff	1,019,000
02	Resource mobilization	138,000
03	Planning meetings with staff/stakeholders	131,000
04	Village/community meeting feeding	632,000
05	Registration of clan forest councils	428,000
06	Transport for field work	570,000
07	Field photos and field reports	113,500
08	Field allowances to staff	1,185,000
09	Documentation and final reports	576,000
10	Total expenditure	4,792,500

N.B: This is just an extract from our monthly overall financial expenditure of the organization.

2.4 CONSTRAINTS

One of the biggest hurdles to overcome in this area is that 60% of the villages concerned are totally dependent on the forest for survival (food, water, shelter, income, etc). In many of these villages, there is no cash agriculture, or indeed a cash economy. This means that there is still a heavy dependence on hunting in the sanctuary for people's basic survival. In areas where hunting and bush meat trade (no matter how illegal) are the mainstay of the local economy,

more time, effort and finance need to be spent on providing alternatives to hunting or strong conservation education for behavior change.

Also, the issue of inadequate funding for field activities is a hindrance to the success of conservation initiatives in and around the wildlife sanctuary. Above all, poverty seems to play a bigger role in motivating the drastic degradation of the environment as the people have no other alternatives to their livelihoods other than the forest and its resources. So far, the project execution was extended due largely because of circumstances beyond our control and we can not thank Rufford enough for accepting the extension following our appeal. The mix up in forwarding preliminary field reports is also highly regretted, but again, we owe Rufford lots of gratitude for their patience and understanding until we came to master the process of sending field reports including field photos. We were further constraint by the sudden death of the younger sister to the Team Leader, Mr. Ngwesse Dominic whose valuable time on the project had to be divided following the funeral arrangements and other family obligations that needed his urgent attention back in his native village. Last but not the least, is the enclavement of 60% of the Banyang-Mbo villages in the hinterlands of Mbo with no road access by land or by air, thus making movement difficult, if not impossible especially during the rains.

2.5 LIVELIHOOD ISSUES

The most common problems cited are lack of access roads to the Mbo hinterland and other villages; animal human conflicts; crop diseases; encroachments by external hunters; high demand and lack of support for development projects in the villages, e.g. feeder road construction, building of schools, bridges, health centres, electricity, community halls and development of cooperatives. The issue of health facilities is another issue of grave concern. In the area, there are only three hospitals in the bigger towns of Bangem, Manyemen and Nguti and eight health centres in Nguti, Ntale, Ebamut, Ebeagwa, Tali I, Takwai, Tabongkwa and Ekwenjoh. Most of these facilities are poorly equipped to combat health diseases like malaria, water borne diseases such as typhoid, diarrhea, filarial and river blindness.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Support from the Rufford Small Grants Foundation has been critical for this project. Without RSG support, it is clear that we would not have been successful and the project would not be in the position where it is now, having fully engaged the communities to manage the sanctuary. Support is still needed to ensure that the Clan forest management committees are fully functional, including maintaining the education programme that is critical for behaviour and attitude change. The next twelve months of this project will be critical. But there is every reason to believe that the communities will be empowered to sustainably manage their respective portions of the forest. If this can be achieved, a model for community management of a protected area would have been developed that will be replicable throughout Cameroon and Africa.

III. DEFINING THE WAY FORWARD

Rufford Small Grant should consider supporting this innovative model for another two years. Within these years the capacity building and mentoring of the institutions would have been completed, Government would have ratified the Management Framework, and Nature Cameroon Board of Trustees will be implementing the strategic plan, and this project would be replicated in other sites in the Cameroon-Nigeria country region to prove that it really does work.

We look for further cooperation ties with the Rufford Small Grants Foundation Programme, so that local communities can be effectively empowered to co-manage protected areas in tropical

forested Africa. Further more, we look forward to seeing the Rufford staff visit us for evaluation and plan of action for implementation of the second and possible third grants.