



Rural  
Development  
Forestry  
Network

network paper 25e  
July 2001

**DFID**



# Rural Development Forestry Network

## **The Law, Communities and Wildlife Management in Cameroon**

Samuel E. Egbe

## **A Community Wildlife Management Model from Mount Cameroon**

Kristin B. Olsen, Henry Ekwoke, Rose M. Ongie, James  
Acworth, Ebwekoh M. O'Kah and Charles Tako

## **Gorilla-based Tourism: a Realistic Source of Community Income in Cameroon? Case study of the villages of Goungoulou and Karagoua**

Elias Djoh and Mark van der Wal

## **Community Hunting Zones: First Steps in the Decentralisation of Wildlife Management. Observations from the Village of Djaposten, Cameroon**

Mark van der Wal and Elias Djoh

CONTENTS		PAGE
25e(i)	The Law, Communities and Wildlife Management in Cameroon <i>Samuel E. Egbe</i>	1
25e(ii)	A Community Wildlife Management Model from Mount Cameroon <i>Kristin B. Olsen, Henry Ekwoge, Rose M. Ongie, James Acworth, Ebwekoh M. O'kah and Charles Tako</i>	13
25e(iii)	Gorilla-based Tourism: a Realistic Source of Community Income in Cameroon? Case Study of the Villages of Koungoulou and Karagoua <i>Elias Djoh and Mark van der Wal</i>	31
25e(iv)	Community Hunting Zones: First Steps in the Decentralisation of Wildlife Management. Observations from the Village of Djaposten, Cameroon <i>Mark van der Wal and Elias Djoh</i>	38

#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Samuel E. Egbe** is a Researcher and Lecturer in the Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Yaoundé II – Soa, and a researcher and consultant in environmental law. He can be contacted at: [egbee@yahoo.com](mailto:egbee@yahoo.com)

**Kristin Olsen**, DFID APO for Community Resource Management, is seeking to integrate participatory monitoring and evaluation into the framework of community-based management initiatives. **Henry Ekwoge**, Area Manager for the Onge Mokoko area, is working to develop a Participatory Management Plan for a State Forest Reserve and adjacent forests. **Rose Ongie**, Area Manager for West Coast area, is working to develop and implement participatory approaches to sustainable wildlife management. **James Acworth**, DFID Forest Management and Conservation Adviser, provides advice on the process of developing sustainable, community-based resource management models, broader forest management systems, land use strategies to ensure long-term maintenance of biodiversity, and support to local livelihoods. **Ebwekoh M. O'kah**, GEF MCP wildlife unit, is responsible for collection of baseline information (on all forms of wildlife) on which to base management decisions, as well as providing advice on methods of participatory wildlife management and training to build local capacity. **Charles Tako** is the former area manager for the West Coast. The authors work for the Mount Cameroon Project (Limbe). This is a Ministry of Environment and Forests project funded by the UK Department for International Development and implemented under contract by LTS International, Scotland. The authors can be contacted at [mcplbg@iccnnet.cm](mailto:mcplbg@iccnnet.cm) and [OLSEN927@aol.com](mailto:OLSEN927@aol.com).

**Elias Djoh** is Director of the Lomé-based non-governmental organisation, CIAD (Centre International d'Appui au Développement), and can be contacted at: CIAD, P.O. Box 24 Lomé, Cameroon. Email: [vso@camnet.cm](mailto:vso@camnet.cm). **Mark van der Wal** is a Consultant for the SNV-SDDL project. He can be contacted at: SNV Cameroon, P.O. Box 1239, Yaoundé, Cameroon. Email: [snvcmpose@gcnet.cm](mailto:snvcmpose@gcnet.cm)

**ISSN 0 85003 536 8**

# THE LAW, COMMUNITIES AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT IN CAMEROON

Samuel E. Egbe

## 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 and wildlife, principally in response to donor conditionality on Structural Adjustment Loans (SALs).

However, the enactment of this law lacked significant domestic support. Conflicting interests and Cameroon's highly centralised administrative machinery have prevented effective devolution of wildlife management. This paper examines the opportunities and constraints presented by Cameroon's reform process, in an attempt to encourage the development of a more forward-looking and better-integrated wildlife management policy.

## INTRODUCTION

Cameroon's 1994 Forestry and Wildlife law was enacted with the objective of involving communities in the management and protection

of forest resources. It constitutes an important aspect of the democratisation and liberalisation process initiated by the State in the early 1990s. The 1994 Law and its 1995 Decree of Application on wildlife (Wildlife Decree) recognise traditional custodians of wildlife resources as partners in the resource management exercise. They were enacted on the assumption that resources are better managed when their local custodians have shared or exclusive rights to make decisions over and benefit from their use.

In bringing decision-making as close as possible to citizens, joint resource management is seen as integral to 'good governance' (Brown, 1999). To succeed, it requires processes to negotiate and share rights and privileges (including tenure and decision-making powers) by multiple stakeholders, and the recognition of these by government and a wide range of resource users (Ingles *et al.*, 1999). Enabling laws and policies are likely to devolve management responsibilities, promote institutional reforms, increase resource flows to forest-dependent populations, and create new partnerships involving changes in ownership and access (Brown, 1999).

Many countries have sought to ‘give back’ rights of ownership and control to traditional users, though to differing degrees. In Tanzania, despite the lack of framework legislation, joint wildlife management regimes with local communities in the Duru-Haitemba and Mgori Forests (Arusha and Singida Regions) have reduced government’s role to one of technical adviser and watchdog. Certain communities have been awarded title deeds (Wily, 1997). These experiences illustrate how local populations with unfettered rights of ownership and control over wildlife resources are likely to be better managers than under-resourced and conflict-ridden public services.

Zimbabwe’s experience demonstrates how appropriate law can improve both conservation and the lives of rural people if it sets in place the correct incentives (FAO/UNEP, 1999). The 1975 Parks and Wildlife Act gave landholders the opportunity to manage wildlife for their own benefit, on the assumption that ‘local proprietorship of wildlife resources was likely to promote investment (of land, money, and time) for their efficient and sustainable management’ (FAO/UNEP, 1999). Under the Act, district councils were designated ‘appropriate authorities’ for wildlife management on communal lands, with government approval and the full participation of communities. Project Windfall (Wildlife Industries New Development for All) and the now famous CAMPFIRE programme (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources) provided significant support to the reform process, and have delivered substantial benefits for Zimbabwe’s rural population.

To better understand the current state of devolved wildlife management in Cameroon,

the following section discusses the circumstances under which the 1994 Forestry and Wildlife Law, and its 1995 Decree of Application on wildlife (Wildlife Decree), were drafted.

### THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE WILDLIFE REGULATIONS

The reform process initiated by Cameroon’s government in 1994 has been complex and difficult, involving differing stakeholders at various stages of the devolution exercise. In the wake of the CFA’s devaluation in 1994, the government was in dire need of foreign currency through increased logging and timber exports. The re-introduction of multiparty politics also meant that timber concessions could be used as a weapon to perpetuate political patronage in favour of domestic and foreign pressure groups. Evidence suggests that the 1994 Law (or at least its provisions on devolution, and transparent and equitable management) was developed under pressure from foreign donors, principally the World Bank – the agency responsible for Cameroon’s Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) (Nguiffo, 1994; Ekoko, 1999; Fombad, 1997). The Law was therefore enacted without the support of a strong domestic constituency of civil society organisations, politicians and younger, reform-minded forestry and wildlife staff.

The donor community closely monitored the drafting of the 1994 Law, in particular its provisions on forest exploitation. This explains the unusual speed with which it was introduced, as well as the emphasis on sustainable logging through long-term concessions, transparent mechanisms for awarding exploitation titles by auction, the introduction of community forests

and equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms involving councils and communities.

However, transparent and equitable management of timber resources was over-emphasised to the detriment of reforms in wildlife management, and a unique opportunity was missed to formulate legislation that treated forests and wildlife holistically. Apart from so-called local ‘traditional hunting’ rights and the manner of exploiting wildlife in council and community forests, the wildlife provisions of the 1994 Law make little mention of the interests of local councils and communities. These provisions merely reproduced some of the backward-looking stipulations of previous laws, such as similar prohibitions on hunting in buffer zones as in protected areas.

By contrast, the 1995 Wildlife Decree introduced entirely new concepts of participatory wildlife management, despite its enactment to implement the wildlife provisions of the 1994 Law. These included community hunting zones, equitable sharing of benefits from wildlife exploitation, the possibility of local councils managing hunting areas, and a forward-looking definition of buffer zones. Why did the 1995 Wildlife Decree depart from the letter of the 1994 Law?

The operational division between the Forestry Department and the Wildlife and Protected Areas Department (DFAP) dictated that the wildlife provisions of the 1994 Law would be drafted by DFAP. This was undertaken by senior DFAP staff, a majority of whom were schooled in colonial-style wildlife policing and who favoured preserving Cameroon’s existing system of wildlife governance. By contrast, the 1995 Wildlife Decree was drafted by a

younger generation of wildlife staff. However, although many of the provisions of the 1995 Decree were new, they failed to provide a holistic legislative framework for local involvement in wildlife management. This partly reflects the fact that this younger generation of staff responsible for drafting the decree received little support and encouragement from external actors, particularly donors (Ekoko, 1999).

The consequences of this lack of support are already discernible. Certain provisions of the 1995 Wildlife Decree (such as those addressing community hunting zones and community royalties from leased hunting zones) have lain dormant for more than four years. In an attempt to implement them, government may resort to further administrative measures. But further complicating the regulatory framework for community wildlife management is unlikely to result in effective implementation (Ngwasiri, 1998). It would, if anything, increase scope for discretionary and conflicting interpretations by literate community members, local elites and State bureaucrats. This type of ‘legislative inflation’ only increases uncertainty (Fisiy, 1992) and, according to a World Bank study of Cameroon’s legislative process, only leaves ‘economic agents [unsure] of the exact scope, precise meaning or real impact of new legislation’ (cited in Ngwasiri, 1998).

### THE CONCEPT OF ‘COMMUNITY’ IN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

For the purposes of the 1994 Law and the 1995 Wildlife Decree, a community must be a recognised legal entity. To obtain this status, a community must demonstrate proof of its existence to the government. In and of

themselves, *de facto* village councils and traditional institutions are not recognised legal entities under the 1974 law on the organisation of councils, the 1977 law on the organisation of chieftaincy, and Article 55(2) of the 1996 Constitution. So these too must demonstrate proof of their existence to obtain status as public law corporate bodies (*personnes morales de droit public*) for the purposes of managing wildlife (Diaw, 1997; Ngwasiri, 1998; Brown, 1999).

But despite the requirement for communities (traditional and otherwise) to obtain legal recognition, no clear definition of ‘community’ exists. Cameroon’s legislators have been faulted for the lack of guidance (Brown, 1999). In both the 1994 Law and the 1995 Wildlife Decree, the terms ‘village community(ies)’, ‘community’, ‘neighbouring community’, ‘one or many communities’ and ‘the members of the said community’ are used interchangeably. Does ‘a community’ include strangers (*non-indigenes*), women, youths or socially stigmatised groups such as the Baka pygmies? Does it mean a village, tribe, ethnic group or clan? Does it assume a traditional, politico-administrative or geographical dimension?

The fact that the Forestry and Wildlife Regulations were enacted in the politically volatile mid-1990s may explain legislators’ choice to favour ‘all components of the community’ or ‘all members of the community’ over exclusionary social, ethnic or tribal definitions. An exclusionary definition might have compromised attempts to forge national integration amongst Cameroon’s two hundred and fifty tribes. Responsibility for ensuring that communities are sufficiently inclusive for the purposes of forest and wildlife management

has been delegated to local administrative authorities (Prefects and Sub-Prefects). Local Prefects, as leaders of the Land Consultative Board, which manages national land, are empowered to settle disputes relating to the membership and boundaries of a community.

The Minister of Environment and Forests recently identified the lack of a clear-cut definition as an obstacle to implementing the 1994 Law (MINEF, 1999). Certain projects and NGOs have also blamed the lack of a definition for difficulties faced in constituting stakeholder groups for resource management.

Yet the law does provide at least minimum guidance on what a community constitutes. First, forests and wildlife zones that can form the object of a management agreement must be situated at the periphery of one or many communities and be areas in which the population has been exercising some activities. Second, all components of the community must be consulted in this endeavour. Third, a community hunting zone is awarded as a matter of priority to the nearest local community, though this is likely to be problematic; traditional tenure systems are not necessarily dependent on geographical locations or proximity and applying this criteria may completely disregard local perceptions of resource rights.

Nevertheless, perhaps the lack of clear definition for a ‘community’ and the requirement for stakeholder groups to demonstrate proof of their existence will not be major obstacles to participatory resource management in Cameroon. After all, Namibia has successfully implemented joint wildlife management, without defining the notion of community, and

with an obligation for interested local stakeholder groups to constitute associations known as ‘conservancies’ for the purposes of legal recognition (Jones, 1999). In Tanzania, legal recognition was not a prior condition of participatory resource management, though the District Council in the Duru-Haitemba forest nevertheless passed village by-laws granting legal recognition to the communities involved (Wily, 1997).

The problem in Cameroon is not necessarily one of definition, but of the influence of powerful interest groups including commercial loggers, centralised administrative practices and ‘result hungry’ projects that leave the government with responsibility for rural advocacy and conflict management.

## COMMUNITY RIGHTS TO WILDLIFE RESOURCES

Cameroon possesses a rich diversity of wildlife resources, popularly known by the pidgin word ‘beef’. Wildlife is very important to local populations. In addition to providing communities with a greater part of their protein requirements, wildlife is an important source of supplementary income. This section of the paper examines the institutional context within which this dependence operates, then relates practical realities as observed in the field. Finally, it offers suggestions for legislative reform.

### Theoretical Conception of Traditional Hunting Rights

How communities perceive and exercise their traditional hunting rights has an important impact on the manner in which wildlife can be sustainably managed. Traditional hunting is

authorised throughout the national territory except in State forests protected for wildlife conservation or on the property of third parties. It is legally defined as hunting using material made of plant origin, and can only be undertaken for subsistence consumption – never commercial transactions. Traditional hunting may be forbidden or regulated where it endangers the conservation of certain species and in protected areas where it is subject to the area’s management plan. Small reptiles, birds and other class C animals may be hunted<sup>1</sup>. Species lists and quotas are fixed by the Minister of Environment and Forests.

### Practical application of traditional hunting rights

Many commentators have argued that the concept of traditional hunting rights, as conceived by Cameroon’s legislators, does not reflect reality (Kamto, 1996; van der Wal *et al.*, 1999). In lacking social legitimacy, current regulations are respected more in their breach than in their observance, and do not benefit the State, local communities, or the objectives of sustainable exploitation.

The use of the home-made ‘dane gun’ and steel wire cable in hunting is almost universal, yet is prohibited by law. The State muddles the situation by taxing dane guns (therefore appearing to legitimise them), even though it is unable to issue their owners with the necessary

<sup>1</sup> The Forestry and Wildlife Law categorises animals into three classes – A, B and C. Class A animals are totally protected, class B partially protected and the hunting of class C animals is subject to conditions laid down by the Minister in charge of wildlife.

authorisation to buy cartridges. At the same time, procedures for obtaining gun permits are too cumbersome and costly for the ordinary villager, and the cost of an imported gun is prohibitive (the cheapest being around 700,000 FCFA). Procedures for obtaining a gun permit therefore favour the literate, rich and powerful – principally urban dwellers or retired military officers and civil servants.

The statutory ban on commercial sale of bushmeat or ‘beef’ by community members exercising their traditional hunting rights is clearly unrealistic. What, for instance, constitutes personal consumption where a hunter sells a few smoked porcupines to buy medicine? Bushmeat is in fact widely sold, either directly by the hunters themselves, or indirectly through urban elites, ‘pepper soup’ sellers and *buyam-sellams* (traders, mostly women), who sometimes provide the necessary means such as guns and cartridges. Species sold include hunted animals such as elephants, buffaloes, deer, antelopes, panthers, chimpanzees, gorillas, civet cats, porcupines, and monkeys, and collected products like mushrooms, honey, caterpillars and snails. The sale of these species, some of which are protected by law, is now rampant in urban centres, including the capital city Yaoundé. While these commercial activities are patently illegal according to the statute book, the State partly legitimises them by collecting business licence taxes (*Impôt Libérateur*) from *buyam-sellams* trading in bushmeat.

Cameroon’s present policy on traditional hunting gives rise to deep mistrust between communities on the one hand, and wildlife services, NGOs and conservation projects on the other. Seizure of meat and arms is the

principal means of enforcing current regulations. Not only does this encourage more sophisticated evasion by so-called illegal hunters, but the latter are hardly prosecuted for these offences. A National Committee for the Fight Against Poaching was established in late 1999 to strengthen seizures. It is too early to assess the efficacy of this donor-inspired institution. Arguably, it attacks the symptoms rather than the underlying causes, and fails to foster a responsible attitude towards wildlife amongst communities.

In the light of these experiences, traditional hunting rights need to be re-defined. This should include legalising hunting equipment and techniques commonly used in a particular area, e.g. steel wire cable and dane guns, while at the same time maintaining destructive practices (such as the poisoning of fish and animals) as punishable offences. Small access permits obtainable upon payment of an affordable fee should also be considered. Such permits should be managed by the closest wildlife service.

The long-term objective should be to group small permit holders into self-governing associations, within which rules are established and enforced by communities with the support of the local wildlife service. The wildlife service is in dire need of personnel and resources to monitor the activities of hunters, and dual enforcement in partnership with local communities is likely to be a mutually reinforcing process – in both reporting and sanctioning infractions. Local hunting associations might also be of assistance in identifying and reporting the presence of ‘stranger hunters’ within their territorial boundaries.

## COMMUNITY BENEFITS FROM THE EXPLOITATION OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

‘Benefit’ is understood here to mean any advantage accruing to local communities from both commercial hunting and protected areas. The benefits of protected areas need to be addressed, as they place a substantial chunk of available and valuable resources out of reach of local communities. Protected areas are likely to become more contentious after the 1994 law earmarked thirty per cent (30%) of the national territory for classification as permanent forest estate (to be used solely for forestry and/or as a wildlife habitat).

### Benefits from commercial hunting

The 1995 Wildlife Decree introduced the concept of equitable sharing of the proceeds of commercial wildlife exploitation, but contributions to developing local socio-economic infrastructure are currently limited to instances where exploitation is undertaken using a hunter guide licence or *licence de guide chasse*. More than four years after enacting the Wildlife Decree, the Minister of Environment and Forests fixed the fee due to communities at ten percent (10%) of the tax collected from hunting zones leased to professional hunter guides<sup>2</sup>, with local councils receiving a further 40%.

Yet communities do not appear to be receiving any of this fee and certain problems need to be resolved. First, a new model concessionary agreement (or *cahier de charges*) for commercial hunting that defines the modalities for

<sup>2</sup> This tax is known in French as *taxe d'affermage des zones cynégétiques*.

payment still needs to be officially approved. Second, it is unclear who will receive and manage this money on behalf of the communities (the decree provides no guidance) (Egbe, 1998; Milol, 2000). Third, current legal provisions for the management of community royalties deal with fees from timber exploitation, but not wildlife.

Cameroon’s wildlife regulations therefore require amendment to institute an equitable benefit-sharing mechanism. The payment of royalties to local populations should be an obligation whenever wildlife is commercially exploited. Communities could be obliged to devote a percentage of these fees to compensate locally recruited guards to monitor and report ‘stranger’ poachers to the local wildlife service. The designation of the mayor as head of the committee charged with managing community royalties should be reconsidered. Mayors are the product of an electoral list system reflecting the national party hierarchy, and so cannot be identified by the electorate at the outset of an election (see Momo, 1995).

### Benefits From Protected Areas

Cameroon’s wildlife regulations require local populations to be compensated<sup>3</sup> for the temporary or permanent suspension of their rights<sup>4</sup> by the

<sup>3</sup> The controversial Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Project is presently enmeshed in problems over compensation. NGOs have been very active in challenging the payments and the bureaucracy involved.

<sup>4</sup> A logging or customary right is defined by law as ‘the right, which is recognised as being that of the local population to harvest all forest, wildlife and fisheries products freely for their personal use, except for protected species’.

creation or extension of a protected area. Section 5(2) of the 1995 Wildlife Decree provides that a protected area can only be established after indemnifying individuals whose rights have been infringed. However, this has hardly been applied in practice. First, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to quantify compensation in lieu of the customary rights of communities. Second, the 1985 law on expropriation currently determines conditions and procedures for compensation which, in combination with the 1974 and 1976 Land Ordinances, means that communities can only be compensated for the loss of their investments on the expropriated land, e.g. crops. Compensation for the value of the land itself is possible only if that land is registered. Obtaining a land certificate is a costly, long and cumbersome procedure. In rural areas, only about 3% of land is registered compared to 80% in some towns (Ngwasiri, 1995). Furthermore, the current scale guiding compensation for loss of crops was designed in 1982, and is out of touch with market realities.

Conflicts between protected area authorities and communities are exacerbated by the fact that hardly any demarcated boundaries and management plans take into account the interests of communities, contrary to the provisions of the wildlife regulations (see also Parren, 1997). Furthermore, the current legal framework does not provide for a percentage of protected area access fees to be injected into the local economy, and it also forbids hunting in buffer zones in the same way as in protected areas.

The failure to adopt an integrated protected area policy involving communities and their socio-economic environment encourages neither

sustainable use of wildlife nor local co-operation in protected area policing. The possibility of devolving protected area management to local Regions and Councils should be considered as a means to improve efficiency. However, legalising hunting would only encourage sustainable use if the benefits outstripped the value of so-called ‘illegally’ acquired meat.

### COMMUNITY HUNTING ZONES

Community hunting zones (CHZ) are the greatest innovation introduced by the 1995 Wildlife Decree. However, compared to reforms in the timber sector introduced under the 1994 Forestry and Wildlife Law, CHZs attracted considerably less parliamentary debate and donor attention. Timber exploitation always receives greater attention than wildlife, not least because of highly visible exploitation activities, the huge sums of money involved and now the payment of timber royalties to communities and local councils. Indeed, the first act of legislative harmonisation after unification of Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon addressed timber<sup>5</sup> and, according to Pénelon (1997), ‘even poorly or badly informed rural people are not unaware of [its] economic importance’.

This is not to say CHZs have been ignored. In the Yokadouma and Lomié (Djaposten) areas in the East<sup>6</sup> and the Poli Subdivision in the

<sup>5</sup> The first forestry law of the United Republic of Cameroon was enacted on May 22, 1973.

<sup>6</sup> See paper 25e(iii) in this mailing by Djoh and Van der Wal, and paper 25e(iv) by Van der Wal and Djoh.

North, projects are assisting communities to acquire hunting zones. But what has stalled the practical implementation of CHZs more than four years after their legal birth? The following sections briefly describe CHZs, and explore whether the current legal framework enables their establishment.

### Description of Community Hunting Zones

The wildlife decree defines a CHZ (or *territoire de chasse communautaire*) as a hunting territory conceded to a local community within the non-permanent forest estate. A CHZ is subject to a management agreement between the community and the wildlife service, for the conservation and sustainable use of its wildlife in the interests of that community. The agreement specifies the CHZ boundaries, the rights and obligations of each party, applicable laws and regulations, practical methods of sustainable exploitation, and the ultimate destination of wildlife products. Communities are entitled to receive free technical assistance from the wildlife service in defining and implementing the agreement.

Forests subject to such an agreement must be situated at the periphery of one or many communities using them for agriculture and hunting. Priority for acquiring such an area rests with the nearest adjacent community. A CHZ management agreement is approved by the local Prefect where the zone lies within the limits of a Division, by the Governor where it spans two Divisions, and by the Minister of Forests where it spans two Provinces. The area of a CHZ must not exceed 5,000 hectares and the zone must be free of any exploitation title or concession.

In preparing a management agreement, the community must designate a representative after a consultative meeting presided over by the local administrative authority and attended by representatives of the wildlife service. During this meeting, the purpose and boundaries of the CHZ must be clearly defined. The application for a CHZ must consist of the following documents:

- the name of the community and copies of its constitution;
- a map and the objectives assigned to the territory;
- a copy of the minutes of the consultation meeting, signed by all those attending; and
- a copy of the papers which certify the aptitude of the community’s designated representative.

### Appraisal of Legal Framework

Although these requirements mirror the provisions of the now amended decree on community forests, the various stages of the application process, and the relevant authorities responsible for receiving, approving and signing a CHZ agreement remain unclear. The extent to which the wildlife service must provide free technical assistance remains unspecified. Do its responsibilities include a wildlife inventory in collaboration with the community? Furthermore, is the maximum area of 5,000 hectares prescribed for CHZs appropriate for sustainable wildlife management? Practical field experience high-lights the need to re-examine the Wildlife Decree’s provisions on CHZs, in order to develop a more holistic legislative framework.

In summary, Cameroon’s attempt to involve communities in wildlife management needs a serious overhaul. As in most other French-

speaking African countries, decentralisation has been largely ‘cosmetic’ (Gueye, 1999). The State remains the *de jure* owner of wildlife resources, charged with setting the manner of exploitation as well as conflict resolution (including prosecution of offenders). It also retains powers to suspend or annul management agreements with communities. There are a number of reasons for this. First, participatory management is a recent concept in Cameroon, instituted largely at the behest of foreign donors. Second, Cameroon became highly centralised after unification in 1972 and government staff grew accustomed to centralised resource management policies. They were therefore unprepared for devolution and came to face significant conflicts of interest after cuts in State salaries in 1993, accompanied by the devaluation of the FCFA a year later. As a result, the devolution of wildlife management as it exists in Cameroon, bears little resemblance to the experiences of countries such as Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Namibia.

### CONCLUSION: THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES IN THE DEVOLUTION PROCESS

Administrative authorities, especially at the local level, have a pivotal role to play in implementing new laws and policies devolving forest and wildlife management. In practice, however, shortages of both material and human resources have rendered many such authorities redundant, leaving some as passive spectators. Their training has not prepared them to respond to the prerequisites of devolved natural resource management, and projects and NGOs have tended to sideline or even ignore them in their attempts to foster new partnerships with communities. Yet, unlike projects and NGOs,

administrative authorities have a permanent stake in the process.

The casualties of this trend are many and varied. First, the Cameroonian State is missing a unique opportunity to take the center stage in the devolution process and to reconcile itself with marginalised forest communities. Indeed some communities may regard new laws and policies on devolution as emanating, not from the government, but from projects and NGOs. Second, administrative staff receive inadequate field training in participatory resource management, which partly explains their inability to actively participate. While their conflicts of interests may generate some resistance to change, this does not justify attempts to sideline them. Participatory resource management requires stakeholders to work together in establishing objectives and developing programmes to meet these. As members of the Land Consultative Board (which manages national lands) and as mediators of local disputes, District heads, Sub-divisional Officers and Prefects are crucial stakeholders in this participatory process. Building dialogue and trust between administrative officials and the traditional custodians of forest and wildlife resources might help to reduce current competition for immediate and unsustainable resource exploitation.

### ACRONYMS

FCFA	Currency in French-speaking West and Central Africa. Exchange rate: 100 FCFA = 1 FRF 750 FCFA = 1 USD
CHZ	Community Hunting Zone
DFAP	Wildlife and Protected Areas Department

MINEF	Ministry of Environment and Forests
NGO	Non governmental organisation
SAL	Structural Adjustment Loans

### REFERENCES

- Brown, D. (1999) *Principles and Practice of Forest Co-Management: Evidence from West-Central Africa*, European Union Tropical Forestry Paper 2, ODI, London.
- Diaw, M.C. (1997) *Anthropological Institutions and Forest Management*, Report on community-based forest management, Nkongsamba. WWF, Cameroon.
- Egbe, S.E. (1998) *The Range of Possibilities for Community Forestry Permitted within the Framework of Current Cameroonian Legislation*. Consultancy report for the Community Forestry Development Project, Yaoundé, Cameroon.
- Ekoko, F. (1999) *Environmental Adjustment in Cameroon: Challenges and Opportunities for Policy Reform in the Forest Sector*, available at <http://www/wri/iffcforest.html>
- FAO/UNEP (1999) *Protected Area Management and Sustainable Rural Development: The Role of Policies, Laws and Institutions*. International Technical Consultation, Harare, Zimbabwe, 26-29 October.
- Fisiy, F.C. (1992) *Power and Privilege in the Administration of Law: Land Law Reforms and Social Differentiation in Cameroon*, African Studies Centre, Netherlands.
- Fombad, C.M. (1997) *The Effectiveness of Environmental Protection Measures in Cameroon's 1994 Law Laying Down Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries Regulations*. *Journal of Environmental Law* 9(7): 57.
- Gueye, B. (1999) *Où va la participation? Expérience de l'Afrique de l'Ouest Franco-phone*. IIED Drylands Issue Paper No. 87, IIED, London.
- Ingles, A.W. et al. (1999) *The Participatory Process for Supporting Collaborative Management of Natural Resources: An Overview*, FAO, Rome.
- Jones, B. (1999) *La gestion communautaire des ressources naturelles en Namibie*. IIED Drylands Issue Paper No. 90, London.
- Kamto, M. (1996) *Droit de l'Environnement en Afrique*. EDICEF, Paris.
- Milol, C.A. (2000) *Impact de la fiscalité décentralisée sur le développement local et les pratiques d'utilisation des ressources forestières au Cameroun*, Final report, Yaoundé, Cameroon.
- Ministry of Environment and Forests (1999) *Report of the National Seminar on Community Forestry*, Yaoundé, 29-30 November 1999.
- Momo, B. (1995) *Réflexions sur le system communal Camerounais: contribution à l'étude de la décentralisation territoriale au Cameroun*. *Juridis Info* 24: 81-92.
- Nguiffo, S.A. (1994) *La Nouvelle Legislation Forestière au Cameroun*. Report for the Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, Yaoundé, Cameroon.
- Ngwasiri, C.N. (1995) *Advocacy for separate land legislation for the rural areas of Cameroon*, PVO-NGO/NRMS Cameroon Publication, Yaoundé.
- Ngwasiri, C.N. (1998) *Land tenure and resource access within some WWF-CPO conservation sites: An analysis of the legal context and traditional tenure systems*. Consultancy report for WWF-Cameroon, Yaoundé.
- Parren, M. (1997) *Review of Nature Conservation Projects in Cameroon during the last Decade: Nature Conservation Projects in*

*Perspective*. Wageningen, The Netherlands.

Pénelon, A. (1997) *Community forestry: It may be indeed a new management tool, but is it accessible? Two case studies in Eastern Cameroon*. IIED Forest Participation Series N° 8, London.

Van Der Wal, M. *et al.* (1999). *Large mammals of the Dja Reserve: Conservation status and threats*. The Golden Ark Foundation/IUCN, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Wily, L. (1997) *Villagers as Forest Managers and Governments "Learning to Let Go": The case of Duru-Haitemba and Mgori Forests in Tanzania*, IIED Forest Participation Series No. 9, London.

**Please send comments on this paper to:**

Rural Development Forestry Network  
Overseas Development Institute  
111 Westminster Bridge Road  
London SE1 7JD  
United Kingdom  
Email: forestry@odi.org.uk

Comments received will be passed on to the authors and may be used in future publications. Photocopies of all or part of this publication may be made providing that the source is acknowledged. The Network Coordinator would appreciate receiving details of any use of this material in training, research or programme design, implementation or evaluation. The opinions expressed in these papers are those of the author and members of the network. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the ODI.

**CREDITS**

<b>Editors of this paper:</b>	David Brown and Kate Schreckenber
<b>Layout:</b>	Rebecca Lovelace and Caroline Wood
<b>Administrative Editor:</b>	Vicky Pett
<b>Translation:</b>	Clare Lord (25e(iii))
<b>Printed by:</b>	Russell Press Ltd, Nottingham on recycled paper
<b>RDFN logo by Redesign</b>	

---

Rural Development Forestry Network  
Overseas Development Institute  
111 Westminster Bridge Road  
London SE1 7JD  
UK

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7922 0300  
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7922 0399  
Email: [forestry@odi.org.uk](mailto:forestry@odi.org.uk)  
Website: [www.odifpeg.org.uk](http://www.odifpeg.org.uk)

This mailing of the Rural Development Forestry Network is funded by  
The UK Department for International Development