



## ACTIVITY REPORT

### Community driven conservation of the African forest elephants



Figure 1: Entrance to the Campo Ma'an National Park



# Community Driven Conservation of the African Forest Elephants Campo Ma'an National Park



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## Community Driven Conservation of the African Forest Elephants Campo Ma'an National Park



### **List of Abbreviations**

CMNP: Campo Ma'an National Park

HEC: Human Elephant Conflict

HWC: Human Wildlife Conflict

IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organisations

VEF: Village Elephant Forum

WWF: World Wildlife Fund for Nature

### **Executive summary**

The purpose of this activity was to support the conservation of the African Forest Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) in the Campo Man National Park in the South region of Cameroon.

The main goal of the activity was to mitigate Human Elephant Conflict through nature-based solutions (beekeeping), while improving on the livelihoods of local forest users (women).

We successfully trained 25 farmers and hunters (12 women and 13 men) in beekeeping (including hive production, mounting, baiting, honey harvesting and marketing) around individual farmlands to deter elephants and as an alternative livelihood

2 education campaigns targeting over 500 students in lycee technique de Campo and Lycee Bilibgue de Campo around the park was conducted and 2 environmental clubs created in the schools. A radio campaign in the Kribi Beach FM on importance of elephant protection and ways to co-exist with elephants was also conducted which is estimated to have reached over 1000 listeners.

2 Consultation meetings were held with 6 (six) members of the Campo Ma'an conservation unit and 6 (six) local village leaders of 3 communities to create a local Village Elephant Forum (VEF) to monitor and report Elephant poaching activities around the park. A toll free number (8522) was created which will be used by the VEF members to report any case of elephant poaching observed around the park

This project has gone a long way to increase local community awareness on the need to conserve elephants and great apes and has established a local community forum to monitor and report elephant poaching around the park.

Beneficiaries also acquired hands-on training in beehive production, baiting, honey harvesting and marketing.

These farmers were also trained to form a small savings scheme (Njangi) to encourage them to save money from the sale of the honey, borrow each other for expansion. The Campo ma'an conservation unit has a 'hunters cooperative' which will purchase all honey produced by the hunters and sale in the city market. This is to provide a steady market for the honey produced by the hunters and also reduce the cost of travelling to the city centre to sell the honey.



***Figure 2: beneficiaries receiving hands-on training in Beehive production***





## **1.0. Introduction/Background**

According to IUCN (2005) human wildlife conflict (HWC) is a situation that occurs when the basic needs of wildlife interfere with those of humans, generating negative consequences for both communities and animals. One of the most common type of Human Wildlife Conflicts is Human Elephant Conflict (HEC).

In the late 1990s, the World Wide Fund for Nature(WWF) recognised that human-elephant conflict(HEC) was a major issue affecting elephant conservation (WWF, 1997)

Although Campo Ma'an National Park (CMNP) is identified as a priority site for the conservation of forest elephants, this species remain threatened by poaching and retaliatory killings resulting from elephant crop raiding during which farmers often experience great economic losses and in retaliation get these animals injured or killed.

This project which represents a pilot activity sought to adopt a community driven conservation approach to improve the protection of the African forest elephant (*Loxodonta Africana cyclotis*) in the Campo Ma'an national Park in the South Region of Cameroon by reducing occurrences of human elephant conflicts, improving livelihoods of forest users and stimulating environmental stewardship among forest communities and the general public living around the campo Ma'an National Park area.

Elephants do not like honey bees and will move away from areas where these exist. Also, beekeeping has been a highly lucrative livelihood activity for forest users through the sale of honey and honey derivatives such as processed honey wax, honey wine, candles, bathing soap etc. and beekeeping also contributes to forest regeneration by promoting pollination and increasing tree cover.

### **1.1. Project Goal**

The goal of the project was to improve the protection of the African forest elephant (*Loxodonta Africana cyclotis*) in the Campo Ma'an National Park by reducing occurrences of human elephant conflicts, improving livelihoods of forest users and stimulating environmental stewardship among forest communities and the general public living around the Park area.

### **1.2. Specific objectives**

The specific objectives of the project were;

- To train 25 forest users (farmers and hunters) including 12 women and 13 men in beekeeping (which included hive production, mounting, baiting, honey harvesting and marketing) around individual farmlands to deter elephants and as an alternative livelihood
- To conduct education and awareness campaigns in local radios and 2 local high schools around the park on importance of elephant protection and ways to co-exist with elephants.
- To liaise with local stakeholders to create 1 (one) local Village Elephant Forum (VEF) to serve as a local vigilance group to monitor and report Elephant poaching activities around the park. This forum included local forest users, leaders of men and women groups, hunters and eco-guards based in the remotest villages inside or outside the Park who can receive a signal and capture and relay information on the presence of poachers, their movement as well as the sightings of elephants, to the existing conservation unit in the area.

## 2.0. Project Results

### 2.1. Hands-on training in beehive production, mounting, baiting, honey harvesting and marketing

This intervention adopted a sustainable approach to train and support 25 forest users (12 women and 13 men) in beekeeping including beehive production, mounting, baiting around farmlands to deter elephants and generate income.

Instead of using planks which could provoke deforestation practices to produce beehives, Local materials such as bamboos from raffia plants were used to produce local round shaped bee hives. These are simple to produce and replace and stay for a considerable period of time

The beehives were then carried and mounted in 'Y' shaped support sticks pinned to the ground or in trees around farmlands to deter elephants. They were strategically placed on areas where elephants would usually use to enter and raid farmlands.

Honey wax was burnt beneath the hives to act as bait for the bees and increase hive colonisation



*Figure 2: Training in beehive production*





*Figure 3: Baiting and honey harvesting*

## 2.2. Conservation education and Awareness creation

Following conservation education/outreach guidelines tailored from Jacobson et al., (2006), we hoped to foster sustainable behaviour, improve public support for conservation, reduce vandalism/poaching in the area, and influence policies and decisions that affect the forest and its natural resources.

Through locally tailored radio programs, over 1000 wide audience (farmers, hunters, bushmeat consumers) received education on the devastating impacts of unsustainable bushmeat hunting especially of protected wildlife species, the far reaching implications of forest degradation and on relevant wildlife laws. Listeners were educated on how to co-exist with elephants and different methods to use to deter elephants from farmlands.



***Figure 4: Awareness Creation at Beach FM Radio***

Over 500 students in 'Lycee Bilingue de Campo' and 'Lycee technique de Campo' were educated on importance of wildlife conservation, ways to co-exists with wildlife especially elephants and 2 (two) environmental clubs were created in the 2 (two) schools. Environmental manuals were also donated to these clubs to guide environmental activities by the clubs.

Members of the 2 (two) clubs participated in symbolic planting of some 50 ornamental trees on the school yard to mark the launch the environmental club activities



***Figure 5: Environmental education in schools***



## 2.3. Creation of Village Elephant Forum

One (1) village elephant forum was created with local forest users, leaders of men and women groups, hunters and eco-guardians based in the remotest villages of Campo ma'an, Nko'elon, and Aka'ak.

Before the creation of VEF, a consultation meeting was held with 6 (six) team members of the Campo Ma'an conservation unit to discuss on the importance of the VEF and its activities. Meetings with 6 (six) local community leaders and forest guards in Campo Ma'an, Nko'elon, and Aka'ak were also held and the objectives and activities of the VEF formulated and discussed with them. A toll free number (8522) was created and given to the VEF members to call and report any observed elephant poaching activity

A plan on the formal legalisation of this forum was laid with the help of the head of the conservation unit of the Campo Ma'an national Park.



*Figure 6: meeting with the Campo Ma'an Conservation unit team*



*Figure 7: meeting with local leaders and forest guards of Nko'elon and Aka'ak*

## 3.0. Project Outcome

With improved beekeeping among farmers and hunters around farmlands, there will be reduced elephant encroachment into farmlands, reduced retaliatory killing of elephants, there will be improved pollination hence, improved crop yield, thus reducing the need for larger farmlands (hence reduced encroachment into elephant habitats). The honey produced from the beehives will be sold to generate income to the beneficiaries and improved lives



#### 4.0. Questions and Answers

During the training workshop with forest users, several concerns were raised by the forest users which included

**Question:** How do we prevent gorillas from invading our farmlands given that they love honey and may come towards the hives in search of honey, creating another challenge with farmers?

**Answer:** Farmers are encouraged to use barbed wires and cultivate chilli pepper around the farmlands to support the fences and deter gorillas around their farmlands. This can provide additional defence mechanism around farmlands to protect against the invasion of Gorillas and other wildlife. This may not be a completely safe approach but can go a long way to provide additional defence against wildlife.

#### 5.0. Challenges

Although targeted communities with mostly primary forests appeared to be rich in honeybees, natural colonisation of beehives turned out to be very low.

Since this was already anticipated, the women and men were thereafter, provided with skills on baiting methods which turned out effective in promoting colonisation. Once again, it was observed that a long-lasting solution would be to promote agroforestry as the presence of flowering plants will foster bee reproduction and consequently, increasing bee population in the area.

Although this project was promising and the goals/activities of the project were also integrated into the long-term initiatives of the conservation service and although a number of local parties (the conservation office of the park, the Campo ma'an local council, other local NGOs and other neighbouring communities) all become very interested and pledged their support to this initiative, GLOWESDA is currently undergoing several restructuring challenges due to some challenges made and will be halting her conservation activities in Cameroon till further notice.

Sadly, as of 2022, there is an ongoing CAMVERT project around the Campo ma'an national park which aims at destroying over 60,000 ha of prime forest for a monoculture plantation. This is presently causing enormous damage to both local communities and wildlife of the Campo Ma'an national park. As of December 2021, more HEC has been registered in affected communities. This warrants a greater challenge for conservationists presently intervening in the Campo Ma'an national Park.

#### 7.0. Recommendations

More holistic and collaborative (especially with the private sector) conservation initiatives and awareness education campaigns are required in and around the Campo Ma'an National Park to address various factors causing serious environmental damage in the area.



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More women should be engaged in conservation initiatives as they have proven to be more directly involved in forests usage, are more concerned about natural resources because it is their only source of livelihood than men.

Due to the challenges I have faced with GLOWESDA, I recently officially applied to the competent authorities in Cameroon to suspend all GLOWESDA activities in Cameroon till further notice.





## Appendix 1 Financial Report

### a. Project Budget

Description of budget items in priority order	Proposed JRTF contribution (in euros)	Proposed contribution from other source (in euros)	Total Cost of Item(s) (in euros)
Communication credit for identification/consultation with	50	50	100
Transportation allowance for 4 team members to field and back	100	300	400
Purchase and assembly of beehive production materials for hands-on	400	200	600
Technical support services of 1 expert in beehive production	100	0	100
Production and editing of an awareness radio recording in English and	200	0	200
Production of 2 environmental club manuals for 2 environmental clubs	200	0	200
Feeding for 4 teams members for one month	50	150	200
Lodging of 4 team members I field for one month	100	100	200
50 Jotters and pens for 50 persons during creation of VEF	100	0	100
promotional material (One banner)	0	100	100
Space rental for training and workshop	0	100	100
Purchase of radio slots in 2 local radios for 6 months	200	0	200
<b>TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET</b>	<b>1500</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>2500</b>

### b. Actual Expenditure

Description of budget items in priority order	Proposed Budget in Euros	Actual Expenditure	Balance
Communication credit for identification/consultation with beneficiaries/stakeholders	100	100	0
Transportation allowance for 4 team members to field and back	400	500	-100
Purchase and assembly of beehive production materials for hands-on	600	650	50
Technical support services of 1 expert in beehive production	100	100	0
Production and editing of an awareness radio recording in English and	200	150	+50
Production of 2 environmental club manuals for 2 environmental clubs	200	200	0
Feeding for 4 teams members for one month	200	200	0
Lodging of 4 team members I field for one month	200	300	-100
50 Jotters and pens for 50 persons during creation of VEF	100	100	0
promotional material (One banner)	100	0	+100
Space rental for training and workshop	100	50	+50
Purchase of radio slots in 2 local radios for 6 months	200	100	+100
Purchase of honey wax for hive baiting to increase colonisation	0	100	-100



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Purchase of toll free number for VEF members	0	500	-500
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET	2500	3050	-550