

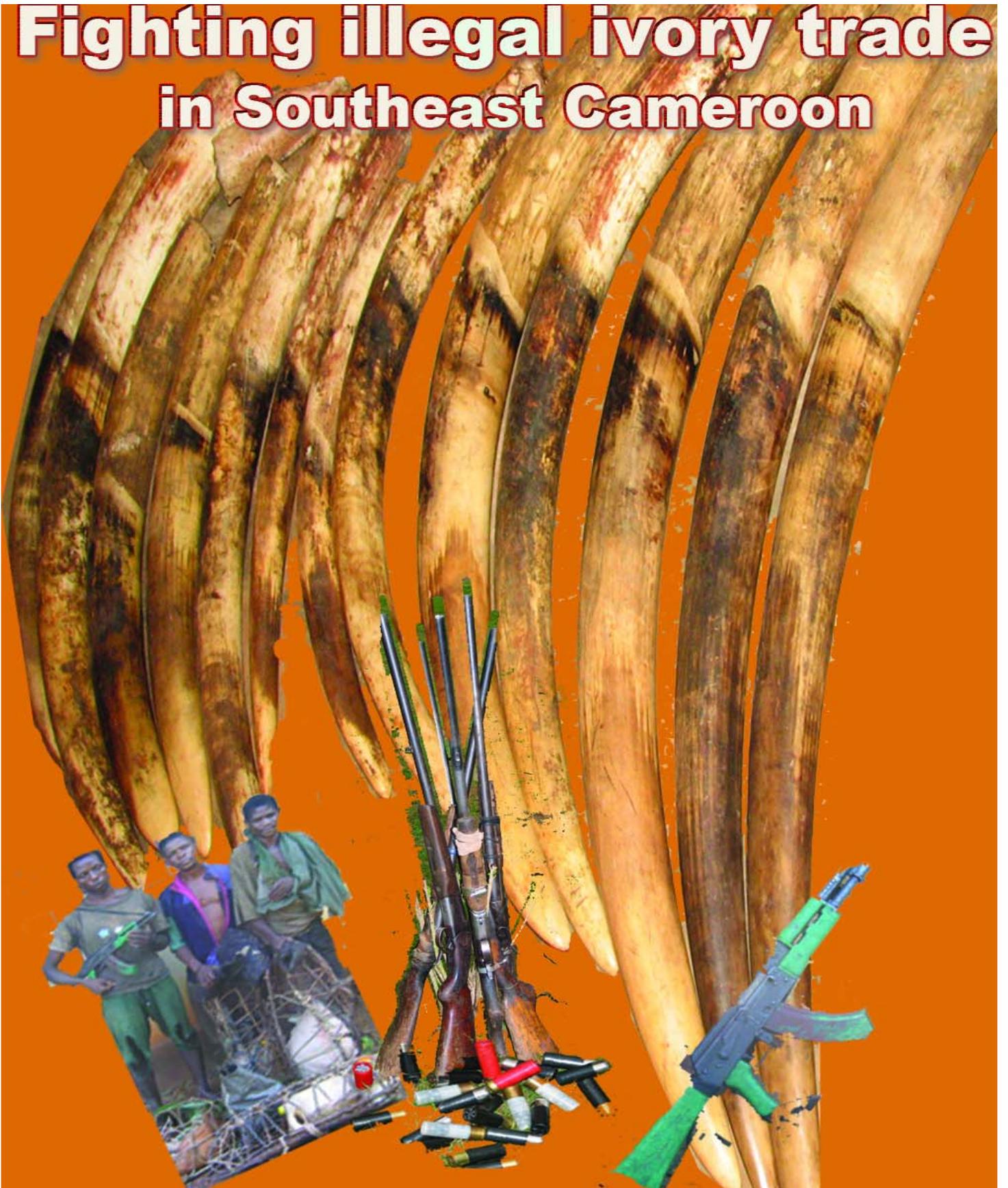


Jengi

WWF Jengi Southeast Forest Programme Newsletter

March/April 2008 edition

Fighting illegal ivory trade in Southeast Cameroon



Fighting illegal Ivory trade in southeast Cameroon

Since WWF started working to protect the rich biodiversity of South East Cameroon in the mid 90s, a lot of progress has been made on the ground. Apart from providing scientific data about key species such as elephants and gorilla that are highly threatened in the area, the WWF Jengi project has boosted its actions by giving support to government to recruit and train game rangers.

The presence of these rangers within and around the national parks of the South East of Cameroon is yielding conservation gains. Forest crimes, especially poaching, are now being increasingly detected, arrested and punished in law courts.

Over the past year, dozens of arrests have been made and hundreds of kilogrammes worth of bush meat as well as ivory have been impounded thanks to the work of these rangers supported by forces of law and order. In March 2008 game rangers working in Yokadouma, a town situated some 630km east of Cameroon's capital, Yaoundé, confiscated 13 elephant tusks and made some arrests. The ivory tusks were hidden away in a tight corner of a truck transporting timber from the East of the country to the port city of Douala.

Last year, TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, reported that Central Africa is currently hemorrhaging ivory and cited Cameroon as among three countries in the sub region most heavily implicated as the sources for trafficking illicit ivory to international markets.

While lauding WWF support to improved law enforcement which has resulted in rigid checks and arrests, the Regional Representative of WWF CARPO, Laurent Some notes however that " experience has shown that this (improved law enforcement) can drive the ivory smuggling circuit further underground". The Regional Representative expressed optimism that with the present enthusiasm and determination exhibited by Cameroon's department in charge of Forests and Wildlife, in addition to support from some Non governmental organizations, the country could



Elephant tusks seized from poachers

be making progress out of the sourcing zone of illegal ivory trade.

Lobeke National and its periphery have a high density of African forest elephants estimated at about 5000. But unchecked poaching may cause fragmentation of the population of this flagship specie in and around the park.

WWF has spearheaded efforts to protect endangered species and their habitats in the area over the years. Agreements have been reached with logging companies and sport hunting outfits in a concerted move to fight poaching. Joint patrols are regularly organized with game rangers and security forces from Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville and Central Africa Republic within the framework of the Tri-national de la Sangha (TNS).

In a park system spanning the above

three countries, deep inside the Congo Basin rainforest, an extraordinary transformation is taking place. Where poachers, illegal loggers and traffickers operated at will by simply crossing a river or driving across the border, can now be chased, arrested and prosecuted. Park rangers from the three countries communicate via radio, conduct joint anti poaching sweeps and meet regularly to discuss anti poaching strategies. Results of this pioneering transboundary initiative are many with multiplication in numbers of arrested poachers and confiscation of thousands of snares. Many years ago, there was little cooperation in this part of the Congo Basin plagued with internal political conflicts. Park rangers remember sitting on the river bank in intense frustration, watching poachers escape across the Sangha River in to another country.

Armed trafficking: threat to wildlife

Legal trade in elephant tusks has witnessed an upsurge in Southeast Cameroon thanks to increase in the circulation of firearms. This is buttressed by the number of firearms confiscated from poachers since February 2008. These included eleven 12 caliber rifles, a Kalashnikov, 50 ammunitions and a grenade.

Arms flow into Southeast Cameroon through the country's porous borders with Central Africa Republic and Congo Brazzaville, both countries that have known several years of war. A recent investigation carried out by WWF Jengi Research Assistant for Nki National Park, Charles Bassama, revealed the circulation of ammunition in Moloundou, a town on Cameroon's border with Congo Brazzaville. "Arms come from Punga in Congo and are transported by individuals with double nationalities (Cameroon and Congo)," he disclosed. Such people easily cross the borders into Congo where guns are said to be cheap. "At least 20 caliber 458 rifles are smuggled into Moloundou every week."

The consequence is increase poaching. "The circulation of war arms is boosting elephant poaching. We recently confiscated a

Kalashnikov and a grenade from poachers. This is a new phenomenon we are getting to grip with in this region," says Pandong Eitel, head of forest and wildlife department in Yokadouma.

The control of arms however, does not depend on Cameroon's Ministry of Forest and Wildlife alone, especially at the frontiers. It requires the interplay of various government departments and the collaboration of neighbouring countries. Given that cases involving war arms are handled by a military tribunal, Cameroon Ministry of Forest and Wildlife, has been reinforcing collaboration with the forces of law and order and the Ministry of Territorial Administration to address this issue.

With the rise in arm trafficking, it stands to reason why elephants and other wildlife species remain increasingly threatened in Southeast Cameroon.

According to Albert Mounnga Abana, Conservator for Lobeke National Park, an inventory of the number of firearms in the region is crucial. "We shall identify legal and illegal gun owners." A vast awareness raising campaign on the acquisition and use of firearms is also envisaged.



Poachers arrested with war arms (Ph. Bassama)

353 parrots beheaded in Lobeke



353 parrot heads (Ph. Zambo)

Game rangers in southeast Cameroon recently arrested a suspect illegal capturer with 350 parrot heads and 2000 red feather tails. The capturer was coming from Pokola in the Republic of Congo Brazzaville, on his way to the West Province of Cameroon. Rangers suspect he must have captured

ue treatment.

For the last eight months, capturers have resorted to cutting off the head and plucking the red tails of parrots unlike in the past when the birds were captured alive. Some 600 parrots have been butchered around Lobeke this year.

Parrots are Class A (totally protected)

the parrots around Lobeke National Park, which harbors a huge number of African grey parrots and has been under pressure from capturers. The suspect told game rangers a witchdoctor curing his mentally ill brother requested parrot heads and red tails to contin-

species in Cameroon, and can be captured upon issuance of a special authorization by Cameroon's Ministry of Forest and Wildlife. Parrots remain one of the sources of revenue for the Wildlife Ministry. Cameroon's official capture quota as determined by CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) stands at 12000 parrots a year. But it is believed 15000 parrots are smuggled out of the country each year, to mostly Europe, Asia and South Africa. Most of the birds come from Southeast Cameroon, where illegal capturers have been active.

An illegal capturer, Atangana Roger, had earlier being arrested by gendarmes in a village near Lobeke. He too had once been caught with 167 beheaded parrots. Under Cameroon's law, persons found guilty of illegally capturing or killing protected species could serve up to one year jail term.

Bakas pygmies in forest revenue management committees

More Baka pygmies have been elected into local committees charged with managing revenues accruing from forest exploitation in Boumba et Ngoko Division East Province of Cameroon. Fourteen Baka pygmies now hold positions in some of the 16 committees. The Baka pygmies were unanimously chosen during elections that took place in the various villages. The inclusion of these indigenous forest people in these committees portrays efforts to forestall further marginalization.

According to Akolea Joseph, one of the elected Baka delegates, the elections have paved the way for greater participation in the management committees. "I am happy about it and hope my presence will help address the needs of Baka pygmies in this committee," said Akolea.

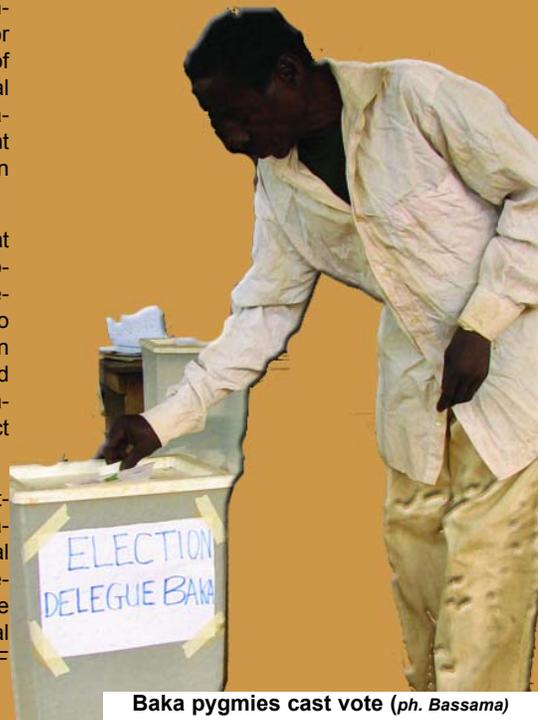
Each committee is made up of six members and has a mandate of five years renewable. They are charged with managing 10 percent of money paid to the state by logging companies. According to the law 50% of the money goes to the state, 40% percent to local council and 10% to the

local population. The latter is supposed to be spent by local committees to carry out micro projects in villages.

The 16 committees receive some FCFA 200 million each year but management of this fund has been poor resulting in the non-completion of projects, to the detriment of local people. This prompted the organization of a forum on the management and impact of forest royalties in January 2006 in Yokadouma.

The forum adopted a road map that proposed greater autonomy and separate bank accounts for the management committees. It was also resolved that unlike in the past, when Mayors or their appointees headed the management committees, community members would directly elect their leaders.

"At last the road map is being executed. We hope the massive participation of the population in the renewal of the management committees presupposes better management of the 10% forest royalties destined for local people," stated Louis Ngonu, WWF Collaborative Management Officer.



Baka pygmies cast vote (ph. Bassama)

Management of community forest enterprises improved

Community forest managers in Southeast East Cameroon recently acquired skills in financial and administrative management, during a two-day training workshop organized by WWF Jengi.

Participants, mostly members of the Network of Community Forest Managers, REGEFOC, were drilled on financial and administrative management and handling of accounting documents. They learnt planning, monitoring and evaluation of community forest; the importance of communication and leadership skills.

The workshop came at the backdrop of a recent evaluation report that revealed that community forest enterprises are wanting in administrative and financial management.

Community forests are 5000 ha of forest portions given to local communities by the state for exploitation for 25 years renewable. Money generated from the forest is expected to be spent on micro-projects in villages. However a 2007 evaluation report of these forest enterprises showed that not much was achieved in terms of village projects by community forests, due partly to mismanagement. Moreover, only a paltry FCFA



Jengi Finance & Administration Officer lecturing community forest managers (Ph. Pegue)

5,223,120 was generated as income wholly because exploitation of some forests began late.

There was general optimism after the workshop that things will be better. "We have acquired much and we think this will improve the running of community forest this year," stated Balonlognoli Maurice of Essayons Voir community forest.

"We realized that managers did not have the needed skills to manage the finances of

community forests. This workshop was thus tailored to improve the situation," stated Claude Chendjou, WWF Assistant Forest Officer. "The assiduity and active involvement of participants in this workshop is testimony of the importance they attached to the training. We are convinced the application of knowledge acquired will enhance transparent management of community forest enterprises and win the support of local people," Chendjou explained.

WWF supports fishpond construction

In a bid to provide alternative source of protein for local people, WWF has supported the construction of a fishpond in Tembe Piste, a village on the outskirts of Boumba Bek National Park. An initiative of a Community based Wildlife Resource Management Committee, (COVAREF No 6) the fishpond measures some 5000 meters square. Some 2000 young tilapias have been dropped into it and the first harvest is expected in April 2010.

Part of the harvest will be distributed to the over 1031 villagers of Tembe Piste while some quantity will be sold to maintain the pond and sponsor micro projects. Mario Malomo, of COVAREF No 6, said during harvest, the fishpond will be drained off. "Each family will have enough fish to eat," Malomo said. "We have created a management committee which will establish a plan to reinforce security of the pond," he said. A shed shall be constructed for visitors who come around to watch the fish swimming in the pond.



Fishpond under construction (ph. Pegue)

WWF alongside GTZ have been supporting initiatives aimed at providing alternative sources of protein other than bush meat consumption. The fishpond is one of

such initiatives. "WWF contributed positively in the realization of this project, through technical and financial support," Malomo said.

WWF seeks better anti-poaching law enforcement in Ngoyla-Mintom

WWF Jengi recently organized seminars aimed at checking illegal exploitation of wildlife resources and ensuring implementation of management plans in logging concessions in the Ngoyla-Mintom corridor. The corridor is Cameroon's segment of the TRIDOM (Dja- Minkebe - Odzala) inter zone that links protected areas of Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville and Gabon respectively. Through these seminars, WWF hopes for better application of the law that regulates hunting and the reinforcement of collaboration amongst the various actors involved in the fight against poaching.

Participants were drilled on hunting law, how to prepare inquiry reports, violation and sanctions meted out on poachers caught red-handed.

Various actors in the chain of law enforcement, including administration, judiciary, forces of law and order and economic operators, committed to fight poaching. A collaborative platform involving different actors was established and a system for



WWF Jengi Collaborative Management Advisor drilled participants at seminar

monitoring proceedings related to wildlife cases in court was put in place.

"I am upbeat by the enthusiasm exuded by participants to these seminars," declared Dr. Louis Defo, WWF Jengi Collaborative Management Advisor. "We noticed there was lack of law enforcement in the Ngoyla-Mintom area. The various actors agreed to meet regularly to evaluate the degree of application of what has

been learnt during the seminar," he said.

The Ngoyla-Mintom Inter-zone is home to one of the largest population of iconic species such as forest elephants, mandrills and great apes (gorillas and chimpanzee). A veritable super highway for animal migration, the corridor has been under intense poaching pressure, posing serious threats to the rich biodiversity of the area.

Ten traditional midwives trained in Boumba Bek

Ten women, amongst them three Baka pygmies, have been trained as traditional midwives in the north of Boumba Bek National Park. The Yokadouma health district carried out the training with assistance from WWF.

The traditional midwives will carry out child delivery in enclave villages situated some 40 km from the nearest health centre. Local health district officers said only 0.5/5 of pregnant women go for pre-natal checks in health centres. A large majority is delivered of their babies by traditional midwives. But the conditions under which these babies are delivered remain poor.

The traditional midwives were taught how to identify pregnancy, monitor pregnant women, carry out risk-free delivery and post natal care. The 10 participants were given a set of equipment including gloves, scissors and bandages to enable them start work immediately. The women all tested HIV negative after a screening test conducted after the training.



Midwife learns how to wear gloves (ph. Njounan)

According to health officials, the traditional midwives will help roll back pre-natal death as they would respect basic rules of hygiene. The midwives will also help track the rate of childbirth in their respective villages by keeping records of children delivered in enclave areas.

The training of traditional midwives falls in

line with WWF Jengi population-health-environment project. "Through this training we shall be saving the lives of a generation of children yet to be born against AIDS. This is giving conservation a human face," said Njounan Tegomo, WWF Jengi Senior Field Research Assistant for Boumba Bek.

Women health and conservation society functional in Lobeke



Women at meeting (ph. Sarah)

Women Health and Conservation Society, WHCS, has been created to help improve the health conditions of women while involving them in WWF Jengi project activities. Based in Mambele, a village near Lobeke National Park, WHCS is the initiative of Sarah Kuhn, a Peace Corps Volunteer. Sarah believes a better way to encourage

the women adhere to WWF's actions, is by informing and involving them in conservation work.

Few women are involved in conservation activities whether in the ecological monitoring team or as health scouts. To change this situation, a meeting bringing together 25 women is held every week to raise awareness of conservation and health issues (malaria, diarrhea, hygiene

and sanitation...). During such meetings, women are taught how to treat water for local consumption. Sarah also teaches them English.

"Our objective is to train them so they can in turn share the knowledge acquired with their associates," remarked Sarah. The meeting also provides opportunities for exchange of views and serves as a forum for discussing other important issues.

"We think WWF recognizes our importance and we do not have the impression we are in a classroom," said one of the participants.

The WHCS also provide a platform for integration of Baka pygmy women. "Despite difficulties in understanding and problems linked to timidity, their (Baka pygmy women) presence is very important for WWF as well as for the reinforcement of community spirit," said Sarah.

Management plans for 3 more community forests validated



Community forest managers display management plans (ph. Pegue)

Three more community forests enterprises have been attributed to local communities in Boumba et Ngoko Division, East Cameroon. A convention signed by the local administrator for Boumba et Ngoko and managers of the three community forests, attributes these portions of forest definitely to the communities. The aim is to encourage sustainable management of the forest while improving the living conditions of local people.

The head of forest and wildlife department for Boumba et Ngoko, Pandong Eitel, urged the local communities to exploit the forests in conformity with the prescription of the simple management plan. "This document (simple management plan) is like a Bible for management of community forest. "It is an engagement with the state. The forest is for local development and sustainable development is a collective tasks. This forest is not owned by any individual," he said.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Fourteen local committees charged with managing 10% of forest revenues have been renewed following elections organized in different villages in Boumba et Ngoko Division, East Province of Cameroon. Democratically conducted, it is hoped the new committees would do better in terms of managing forest revenues. The general feeling has been that local people have not benefited much from these revenues in the past. Each year, about FCFA 200 millions is allocated to local communities found in areas where timber exploitation takes place.

This money is supposed to be used to finance projects aimed at improving the living conditions of locals. But the communities have little to show for due to mismanagement. It was this bleak situation that prompted WWF and GTZ to organize a forum on the management of forest revenues in Yokadouma in January 2006 during which far reaching resolution were taken and a road map established. The new committees have many Baka pygmies as members and it is hoped increase representation will impact on their living conditions.



Local casts vote for transparency (ph. Ngono)

Wildlife film projection raises conservation fever

A recent awareness raising campaign through film projection enabled WWF Jengi to directly exchange views with local people. A cross-section of the population of Ngoyla, a district located near Nki National Park, East Province of Cameroon, were treated to a documentary on Great Apes (gorillas and chimpanzees) projected on a giant screen to draw attention to endangered wildlife species.

Locals watched with awe the striking resemblance and characteristics human beings share with gorillas and chimpanzees, making them understand that man is not so different from his "cousin of the jungle."

Locals had the opportunity to express their worries and to question some of WWF's actions aimed at protecting wildlife in the area. The active participation of the public helped WWF to evaluate the degree of awareness of local people with regards to conservation and protected wildlife species. "We need to urgently extend these campaigns to different villages around Nki. Thanks to this meeting, we are able to know the grievances of the local people with regards to our work. We are poised to work with the Ministry of



WWF Jengi Regional Coordinator addressing audience before film show (ph. Pegue)

Forest and Wildlife and other stakeholders to address the problems," explained Hilaire Ndinga, WWF Park Assistant for Nki.

These sensitization campaigns are very important in remote places like Ngoyla where poverty and high rate of unemployment are partly responsible for intense poaching. "It is necessary to ameliorate the living condition of local people in order to encourage them adhere to our actions and in turn contribute to the conservation of protected wildlife species," stated Dr.

Leonard Usongo, WWF Jengi Regional Coordinator, who took part in the projection.

Nki National Park covers a surface area of 309365ha and harbors rich flora and faune, with an increasing number of forest elephants, estimated at 2955, and a relatively stable population of chimpanzees and gorillas. However, poaching pressure on the northeast and trans-boundary poaching in the southeast of the park are posing increasing threats to the wildlife population.



Fanfare in Ngoyla upon arrival of Jengi team (ph. Bierschwale)



Quiz winner rewarded (Ph. Pegue)



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