

**REPORT ON A TRANS-BOUNDARY
EXCHANGE VISIT TO TAKAMANDA NATIONAL
PARK, CAMEROON: 9TH -14TH JULY 2012**



Compiled by

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INTRODUCTION

As a follow-up on the trans-boundary collaboration platform already established between the Cross River National Park (CRNP) and Takamanda National Park (TNP), a trans-boundary exchange visit was organized between the Cross River National Park (CRNP) in Nigeria and Takamanda National Park in Cameroon from the 9th to 14th of July 2012 in Mamfe, Cameroon. This trans-boundary exchange visit was facilitated by WCS and funded by the Arcus Foundation. The objectives of this trans-boundary exchange visit were as follows:

- Review of joint patrol efforts and make recommendations for way forward;
- Discuss joint threats particularly on illegal logging and make recommendations for way forward;
- Review the use of CyberTracker in CRNP and TNP, share knowledge and lessons learnt;
- Review alternative livelihood efforts in CRNP and TNP particularly Okwangwo, assess current efforts in TNP, share knowledge and lessons learnt.
- Plan for future joint patrols, exchange visits and annual trans-boundary workshop.

This report presents discussions and recommendations from the recent trans-boundary exchange visit held in Cameroon to strengthen trans-boundary conservation collaboration between Cross River National Park and Takamanda National Park, facilitated by the Wildlife Conservation Society.

OBJECTIVE 1. Review joint protection efforts and make recommendations for the way forward.

It was agreed that levels of hunting are high within both National Parks, as recorded by the large number of wire snares and empty shotgun shells observed during Joint Patrols. However both CRNP and TNP management argued that wire snares and shotgun shells should be classified as either fresh, old or recent to enable both Parks to clearly make useful decisions in future patrol planning to areas where the threat is most recent. It was also unanimously agreed that the joint patrols have improved the patrol effort along the common boundary as both CRNP Rangers and TNP Eco-guards would normally not patrol that far during their independent routine patrols.

While it was unanimously agreed that the current number of joint trans-boundary patrols per year be maintained, field reports indicated that there was need to increase patrol effort by carrying out additional joint patrols during the bush mango collection season and Christmas period in order to reduce the high levels of poaching and illegal logging observed along the common boundaries of the two National Parks.

It was also argued that in order to improve efficiency and joint patrol effectiveness, patrols should be goal specific (whether anti-poaching patrols or research). It was argued that eco-guards/Rangers should focus on hunting and illegal activities and only record evidence of presence of animal species upon opportunistic encounters.

On the effectiveness of team composition, it was agreed that the composition of the joint anti-poaching patrol team shall always be 6-7 eco-guards from TNP and 6-7 rangers from Okwangwo Range of CRNP. This will have an intimidating effect on the park defaulters but shall work in a highly professional manner not to frustrate efforts by scaring away the defaulters before they are caught. In this respect the TNP eco-guards shall therefore avoid the use of porters and guides during patrols.

It was also observed from the various presentations that the joint patrol efficiency and effort could be greatly improved if the Rangers/Eco-guards were well trained in the use of additional navigation equipment such as GPS units and Compass units in order to reduce time wasted going round the same spot and being lost. Other issues raised by the TNP Eco-guards include slashing of the forest by the Nigerian team while to remote areas, while the CRNP Rangers argued that poachers would normally not follow village trails and that they only do that when there was no other option. The CRNP rangers on their part complained that the TNP Eco-guards reliance on their Mission order was compelling them to walk along village tracks where little or no hunting signs could be detected, and this was greatly hampering patrol effort and efficiency.

Issues of disparity in allowances and what days are paid for were raised by the CRNP rangers, and suggested that travel days should be paid for as was the case with their TNP counterparts. At the end of these discussions, the following recommendations were proposed:

- That the objective of each patrol be discussed and agreed upon by the partners and park management of both parks and communicated clearly in advance to the team leaders of both parks. All staff should have email accounts and check them regularly.
- That Rangers and Eco-guards always carry along their navigation equipment and make use of them in the field during patrols to increase effort rather than follow footpaths. Therefore they must constantly revise their notes on map reading and navigation.

- That TNP Eco-guards consider restricting the use of porters during joint patrols.
- That payment rates for mission allowances and food rations of both countries are different and shall be respected by each management, but shall not be compared by rangers and the eco-guards. However, it is highly solicited that the payments of such fee should be considered from the dates when rangers or eco-guards leave the office and when he returns to the office (in other words all travels days should be taken as part of the mission). In this respect, Rangers and Eco-guards shall not be paid for unjustified travel days.
- That during joint patrols the team should make use of existing trails in the forest and hunting trails and avoid slashing of the forest unnecessarily.
- More training for the Rangers and Eco-guards on the proper use of field navigational instruments in order to improve patrol effectiveness and effort.
- Training on anti-poaching techniques for both the Rangers and the Eco-guards in order to improve protection effort.

OBJECTIVE 2. Discuss joint threats particularly illegal logging within the Parks & Buffer Zones and make recommendations for the way forward.

Presentations from previous joint patrol reports indicate that illegal logging and illegal trade in sawn timber was going on in Takamanda National Park, and some of the illegal timber was being floated through the Nigerian water-ways to markets in Nigeria, and that most of the dealers were either Nigerians or had their sponsors in Nigeria.

While lamenting that the TNP Management cannot fight this illegal logging alone, as some of these illegal loggers are heavily armed and are ready to kill, the Takamanda National Park authority solicited the support of Cross River National Park in tackling this threat.

While sharing the frustrations expressed by their Cameroonian counterpart, the Cross River National Park Management representative advised their Cameroonian counterparts to rather seek collaboration with their law enforcement agencies in tackling this threat, as Cross River National Park is not constitutionally empowered to do that. It was agreed that while there was the need for a joint trans-boundary sensitization on the Park policies of both National Parks, defaulters should be tried under the laws of the Park in which the offence was committed.

The Cross River National Park representatives further suggested that TNP Management should work in collaboration with communities within Takamanda to tackle this issue of illegal logging as this could only be going on with the knowledge of these communities.

On the issue of sharing proceeds from timber seized from timber dealers whose timber has Takamanda origins, the Cross River National Park representatives responded by saying that all timber seized within the shores of Nigeria is treated as Nigerian timber as its origins cannot be ascertained, and in which case it is dealt with by the Task Force on Anti-Deforestation and not the National Park, except when the offence is committed within the National Park Boundaries.

The CRNP Rangers argued that the policy of TNP of allowing temporal sheds to be erected for NTFP collection was a threat to protection effort as poachers, loggers and NTFP collectors were using these structures for their illegal activities. The TNP Eco-guards on the other hand explained that this policy was entrenched in the user right agreement between the TNP and the Takamanda communities, and was thus different from the CRNP policy of dismantling all sheds irrespective of the materials from which they were made.

At the end of discussions, it was recommended that:

- Fines and other punishments meted to these defaulters when arrested should be heavy and private lawyers should not be given the least room to derail the course of justice in these matters.
- That the Okwangwo Range Rangers especially those patrolling and controlling the Bashu axis should impound any wood and *Carpolobia* seen coming from the TNP direction and should send to the conservator TNP any document that the defaulters may have in their possession because these are fake as only the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife issues exploitation permits in Cameroon.
- That result of the prosecution of defaulters arrested during joint trans-boundary anti-poaching patrols should be communicated to the Conservators of both parks as soon as the prosecution is completed.
- That joint trans-boundary patrol reports be exchanged between both parks and WCS of both countries within 2 weeks maximum following the end of a patrol after WCS would have edited such a report.
- Important pictures during such patrols should be shared with both parks and WCS but photo credit must be given to the Rangers or Eco-guards that would have taken the

pictures. Such pictures should carry at least the following basic information. Name of Ranger/Eco-guard who took the picture, GPS coordinates if possible, date, time if possible and name of event.

- That in the case of encountered bush sheds; destruction shall be carried out in the case of TNP if the structure is not of the agreed material prescribed for NTFPs collection sheds and if there is evidence of hunting. However, all bush sheds will be destroyed in CRNP irrespective of the construction materials.
- That periodic joint sensitization campaigns involving the Conservation Education Officers and the Rangers/Eco-guards should be carried out in the trans-boundary communities on the policies and conservation laws of both countries at least twice a year.

OBJECTIVE 3. Review the use of the CyberTracker in the Okwangwo Range of CRNP and the TNP, share knowledge and lessons learnt.

It was clear to all participants that CyberTrackers were not put to effective use by both Cross River National Park rangers and the Takamanda eco-guards or the Management of both Parks, except during WCS facilitated patrols.

Problems encountered in the field on the use of Cybertracker units for recording data were discussed and the following recommendations were made:

- That CyberTrackers should be used for all independent patrols in both parks to facilitate data collection and analysis as well as improve their respective database and not only during WCS facilitated patrols.
- That Rangers and Eco-guards should always carry along their navigation equipment (GPS units and Compass units) and make use of them in the field during patrols and take notes on note pads when there are problems with the CyberTracker units.
- That Rangers and Eco-guards constantly revise their notes on map reading and navigation and the use of such equipment.
- That WCS personnel assisting both parks to ensure the effective use of the CyberTracker should communicate field experiences and equipment failure shortcomings to the CyberTracker designer for updates.

OBJECTIVE 4. Review alternative livelihood efforts in CRNP & TNP, assess current efforts in TNP, share knowledge & lessons learnt.

During the meeting, Ms. Delphine Agbor of GIZ project presented achievement and challenges of on-going alternative livelihood projects in Takamanda for the past five years. Projects mentioned included snail farming, economical tree nurseries, NTFPs domestication, beekeeping, provision of cassava processing mills and establishment of demonstration farms and road construction projects to de-enclave forest communities. Presentation from Nigeria side was made by Louis Nkonyu of WCS which covered general conservation education and other community activities with emphasis on alternative livelihood and focus mainly on beekeeping and snail farming. The essence of this session was to enable the team share knowledge on the progress and impact of livelihood in both side and lesson learnt. Snail farming in Cameroon failed after only one year, perhaps due to the introduction of alien snail species which were not adaptable to the climate, other reasons were the type of snail pen used (constructed with wood and later collapse) and poor monitoring. For the beekeeping, she explained that the project selected youth in villages within Takamanda and sent to Bamenda and then provided them with 5 hives each. She added that some of the hives have colonized and they have started harvesting honey. Ms. Delphine emphasized that project implementation is based on village Development Plan (VDP) developed by Programme for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (PSMNR). Other successful project as explained by Delphine include construction of 2 roads to Takamanda and Okpambe, agricultural projects, Non-timber forest products domestication and commercialization (Eru, Bush Mango and kola nut), Cassava project, cocoa project and oil palm was carried out.

On the 3rd day, the team visited Kajifu village where Louis Nkonyu met with some bee-farmers who attested that their hives are working though still emphasize on problems of colonization. They presented some honey harvested and responded to question asked. Other projects visited include garri processing factory, cocoa and oil palm nurseries and on-going construction of TNP Headquarter. In conclusion, in comparing snail farming and bee keeping, beekeeping was more successful in Takamanda. The rain and swollen rivers could not allow the team to visit Takpe and Okpambe to meet hunters visited in 2009 but was lucky to meet with Martin Asu in Mamfe, one of the beneficiaries from Okpambe who benefited from the previous DED project. He explained the success of beekeeping but said less on snail farm. At the end of this session, we learnt that:

- Snails (Garden snails) introduced in Takamanda project were alien species and as such they were not able to adapt so they die within 1 year.

- That Takamanda Livelihood project target group not individual and as such people don't have responsibility in managing group business.
- Durable materials for construction of snail pens were limited in Takamanda
- There was poor monitoring of snail farms
- Colonization of bee hives was also low as same to Nigeria.
- NTFPs domestication may reduce pressure from wild resource
- Garri processing mills generate income for target group and community

Objective 5. Plan for future joint patrols, exchange visits and annual trans-boundary workshop.

It was agreed that the current number of joint patrols per year (four) be maintained and it was recommended that if possible, additional joint patrols should be organized during peak hunting season (festivals such as Christmas, New Year and Traditional festivals) in order to reduce the levels of hunting within the two National Park boundaries. Following difficulties experienced by the Rangers and Eco-guards in the field during joint patrols, the following recommendations were made for future joint patrols:

- That sufficient field equipment such as Cybertrackers, GPS units, compasses, appropriate tents, back-packs, cooking utensils, sleeping mats/bags be provided for field teams.
- That basic First Aid Kits which must be prescribed by a medical practitioner and should carry a guide on the use of the drugs therein be provided for each team.
- That a means of communication (Thuraya phones) though expensive should be purchased and at least a unit provided for the joint trans-boundary patrol team in order to improve the effectiveness of future trans-boundary patrols.

On future exchange visits and annual trans-boundary workshop, participants were unanimous that such decisions were at the level of higher management authorities of the two National Parks. The next trans-boundary patrol was slated for September 2012, but it was feared that it could be hampered by rains and flooded rivers. It was suggested that the use of inflatable boat for the Rangers and Eco-guards for patrols across the Magbe (Oyi) Rivers especially in the rainy season for future patrols be considered by both National Parks and their WCS partners.

Appendix

Photos



TRIP AGENDA

Date	Destination	Activities
9/07/2012	Mamfe	Arrival of the participants from the CRNP
10/07/2012	California Hotel Mamfe	<p>-Meeting with the TNP Colleagues</p> <p>Presentations</p> <p>Welcome address and overview of TNP by the conservator Mr. Walter Ashu Egbe</p> <p>Overview of CRNP by Henry Ndoma on behalf of CRNP Conservator. Follow by Okwangwo Range Head presentation on park protection and patrols in Okwangwo Range of CRNP</p> <p>TNP Eco-guards/WCS Cameroon presented Park Protection & Patrols in the TNP</p> <p>Presentation by Ms Agbor Delphine on the Livelihood Program in TNP by GIZ follow by questions and discussion on success and failure</p> <p>Review of Joint Patrol Efforts – TNP Eco-guard/CRNP Ranger</p>
11/07/2012	California Hotel Mamfe	<p>Conservation Education & Sensitization in TNP/CRNP</p> <p>Discussion on Illegal logging and illegal trade in sawn wood in Takamanda-Mone Landscape with Nigeria</p> <p>Review of Cybertracker Monitoring Efforts</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Meeting with government officials to introduce on-going trans-boundary program and opportunity for TNP to discuss law enforcement. Those invited include: Court Magistrate, Attorney General, Divisional Officials, and Commissioners of police and MINFOF provincial delegate.</p>
11/07/2012	Kajifu - Takamanda	Field visit – meeting with village development committee, alternative livelihood project – bee-farmers, garri processing machine, cocoa and oil palm nursery and on-going construction on Takamanda headquarter
13/07/2012	California Hotel Mamfe	<p>Summary of discussions on day 3</p> <p>Review of field visit</p> <p>Review of the Joint Activities/ Planning of Future activities</p> <p>Other Matters for way forward</p> <p>Report preparation/workshop resolutions</p>
14/07/2012	Nigeria	Departure

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