
IMPULSE PAPER - Stream 2 : Biodiversity – Future of Protected Areas in Central Africa

General purpose: *To continue the implementation of the COMIFAC Member States' Declaration of Commitment for the Forests of Central Africa (CA) and call for equitable financing at COP26 with the joint donor declaration for a "Fair Deal" towards sustainable development of the Congo Basin, its peoples, its forests and its biodiversity.*

The focus on the future of protected areas (PAs) includes issues related to the CBD - Post 2020, good practices in PA management, peaceful transhumance for peaceful coexistence, ecotourism, sustainable employment and income creation, payments for ecosystem services..

- Streamleader: COMIFAC
- Co-leaders: AWF, WCS
- Resource persons:
- Olivier Mushiete (ICCN)
- Michel Baudouin (APN)
- Paul Scholte (GIZ)
- Maxime Nzita (ECOFAC VI)
- Praveen Moman (Volcanoes Safaris)
- Romain Calaque (B4life/NaturAfrica)
- Ngono Romuald, Julia metsio, GIZ COMIFAC
- Julia Barske (WWF)
- Florence Palla (RIOFAC)
- Blocks Leaders of the implementation of the N'Djaména Declaration
- Authors of the studies of the German CBFP Facilitation

Recall of commitments of the Central African States Declaration for the COP 26 in Glasgow

1. Strengthen national agencies for the management of protected areas and the development, where appropriate, of public-private partnerships (PPPs)
2. Maintain and strengthen regional cooperation and intersectoral coordination in biodiversity conservation, particularly through the management of transboundary national protected areas with respect to State sovereignty
3. Intensify advocacy within international fora in favour of financing the conservation and sustainable management of Congo Basin (CB) forest ecosystems
4. Establish mechanisms to offset the damage caused by wild animals in plantations and villages bordering the Congo Basin forests
5. Establish a sub-regional multidisciplinary platform on transhumance management

Background and key issues

The main PA complexes, especially those that are transboundary, represent the main ecological zones of the AC sub-region: Sudanian savannahs, Sudano-Sahelian savannahs and even Saharan savannahs, tree savannahs, dense and humid forests, swamp forests/gallery forests, mangroves, highland forests, etc. In several cases, the Parks and Reserves that constitute the heart of the protected landscape are surrounded on the periphery by forest concessions allocated to LT to concessionaires (which are in principle under management, and increasingly certified as legal or even sustainable management) and/or by sport hunting areas/reserves allocated to M/LT to amodiataires/hunting guides. The hunting areas have PA status and are delegated to private individuals who exploit them and pay royalties and taxes to the States. There are also rare tourist vision concessions (TNS and Virunga-Volcanoes, Akagera,...), Zoo and Botanical Gardens in towns, and some rare private wildlife enclosures.

Whatever the case, the question of the future of these PAs arises and therefore the question of the management model of these PAs in a long-term sustainability approach, knowing that demographic pressure is increasingly prevalent, and even sometimes already very strong in the most populated regions, or those considered to be the last settlement areas for humans, but also for their herds.

The CA states, owners of numerous PAs of all categories, allocate only a small public budget to their functioning, and even only a few under-supervised and under-equipped personnel. International public development aid, in the form of technical-financial assistance to a limited number of PAs, slows down but does not stop, and even less reverse, the deterioration because it does not allow for the significant and lasting strengthening of the failing administrations in charge of their management. Moreover, the human resources necessary for the good governance and management of the different categories of PAs are insufficient in quantity and quality.

In practice, only the 18 PAs (including the FZS partnership and ICCN co-management contract for Lomami) under delegation of management and co-management with private organisations such as international conservation NGOs and a few dozen managed by hunting Concessionaires, with a long-term delegation mandate, are demonstrating their capacity to reverse or at least stabilise the trend of degradation of biodiversity and its habitat within the limits of protection. At the level of the PA itself, this can only be achieved through a very rigorous surveillance system, an effective anti-poaching mechanism, the ability to enforce laws and regulations to the point of effectively punishing offenders, respect for human rights and engagement with local populations, the ability to compensate for the damage caused by wild animals to local crops, the ability to keep transhumant herds away from pastures and available natural water points, etc. Outside the PA, this should include support for land-use planning and development processes so that people can develop their economic and social activities without having to seek to satisfy their basic needs through the extraction of natural resources within the PA. After a decade of hindsight, we can see that delegated management of PAs involves both states and donors in alternative and virtuous processes of governance and management in M/LT of territories that go far beyond the limits of the PAs themselves, but their number remains very small in CA and the actors capable of being delegates too few. The observation is that management delegation, by creating confidence, makes it possible to mobilise much more funding for the delegated PA.

Everywhere the challenge is considerable, even more so in the most populated highland and savannah areas. The reality is also that the vast majority of PAs remain unfunded and unmanaged.

Conservation of a PA is expensive, generally 5-10€/ha/year. However, most CA PAs, often transboundary, are difficult to access, sometimes located in areas of high insecurity. Until now, for these reasons of isolation and insecurity, vision tourism has remained marginal and does not allow the parks to be financed (with the notable exception of the mountain gorilla in DRC and Rwanda). Sport hunting tourism is in great difficulty, having enjoyed good times in the past, but successive security and health crises and demographic pressure in certain areas have greatly weakened it. For states, despite having ratified international commitments regarding the percentage of their territory allocated to conservation, it remains difficult and often impossible, for financial and social reasons, to allocate substantial budgets to wildlife protection areas while the country's populations remain poor.

Poor governance of the territories by the various actors involved at the administrative, customary and economic levels has many negative effects on the PAs, as soon as there are opportunities for immediate gains linked to illegal activities such as access to grazing land, water, gold panning, poaching of fauna and flora, access to land for farming, etc. By definition, revenues from illegal activities in PAs never reach the state coffers, and the cycle of general impoverishment is accentuated, except for the privileged few who have taken advantage of their dominant position. This poor governance is most often correlated with problems of insecurity, and when the security of goods and people is not assured, it is not possible to envisage the development of investments in any field.

In practice, it is the whole question of creating a favourable environment that is posed so that the conditions for balanced development can exist on the scale of the landscape within which the PA is one element among others in the planning of the territory and its socio-economic development. In the long run, some states will have to choose between increased protection and the transformation of land into agriculture and livestock farming. The question of the economic and social yield of protected areas is therefore a pressing one, because if PAs remain unproductive, future pressures could lead to their disappearance.

The question of how PAs should be managed (centralised or decentralised) through a private body requires reflection on whether the 30% objectives can be achieved efficiently. Similarly, the need for linkage (mainly legislative) to the economy needs to be accelerated (most countries would integrate the Blue Economy concept without including PAs).

The "miracle" solution long advocated by conservation actors, based on the valorisation of PAs and the financing of their protection through tourism (eco-tourism, hunting tourism), is proving to be increasingly unrealistic for the

majority of CA PAs; this is due to both cyclical (health crises, political instability, insecurity) and structural reasons (weakness of the tourism sector in most countries, lack of political support, difficulties of access, disadvantages of forested PAs for visionary tourism)

Some questions for the sub-groups

1. How to ensure the financing and management efficiency of PAs in CA?
 - What is the management/investment cost per year of the different PAs in Central Africa? What is the funding provided, and for how long, what models, mechanisms, modalities for payment for ecosystem services? How to mobilise endogenous funding for the financing of PAs? How to intensify advocacy within international fora in favour of financing protected areas in Central Africa?
 - How to ensure effective AML in PAs and beyond at the landscape level?
 - What role for national PA agencies?
 - and on what model of financing? How to create new ones?
 - What models, combinations of sustainable management models to ensure biodiversity conservation and PA effectiveness? (1) Delegation of management, PPP, Co-management - (2) How to develop and accelerate the development of national PA agencies? Technical, human and financial capacity?
 - How to strengthen regional cooperation and cross-sectoral coordination in biodiversity conservation, especially through the management of transboundary national protected areas?
 - National PA agencies: Operating costs? Some figures on budgets and staff of ICCN, ANPN, ACFAP and others?)

2. How to ensure an enabling environment and towards the 30% PA target (3 countries are already above 30%)?

Management efficiency of Protected Areas in Central Africa: mismatch between increase in PA surface and management efficiency of existing PAs; target of 30% of PAs for each CA country in a context of climate change and biodiversity loss.

- What models for CA PAs by 2030 and beyond in a sub-region where the population will double by 2050 and at least triple by 2100?
- Is there a real need to increase PAs when most are already "paper parks"? (bearing in mind that there are major demographic differences between the 10 countries in the sub-region, notably Gabon, Congo and CAR)
- Is a strategic 'retreat' (concentrating scarce resources on residual pockets of biodiversity in order to be able to conserve them more effectively) possible and if so, under what conditions?
- Which PA management mechanisms would be appropriate in the context of 30% of PAs if all countries joined: centralised or decentralised management?
- How to integrate the human resources issue?
- How to institutionalise the enforcement of PA Management Plans?
- Should the concept of "Buffer Zones" be reviewed or redefined, as in most PAs they hardly exist anymore?
- How can PAs be integrated into a landscape approach with the necessary development of agriculture and forestry in the face of increasing rural and urban needs?
- How to design multi-purpose PAs within a multi-actor landscape?
- How to improve and accelerate the formalisation and implementation of agreements between states and local actors on transboundary PAs?
- How can forestry and hunting concessions (and communal forests) be integrated into a logic of synergy with the Parks and Reserves that constitute the heart of the landscapes dedicated to protection? How to update hunting tourism concessions and multiply vision tourism concessions (OECMS) in French = other effective conservation measures per area?
- How to ensure that biodiversity conservation and landscape restoration are properly represented in economic planning systems in CA?
- How to convince and facilitate public and private investment in PA landscapes?

3. Comment développer le tourisme dans les AP d'AC ?
6. What future for vision tourism depending on the natural environment (savannah, desert, forest, mountain, mangrove, etc.)?
7. How to develop synergies between vision tourism, hunting tourism, hiking or horse riding, industrial tourism, research tourism, etc. e.g. hunting areas?
8. How can hunting tourism be diversified?
9. What synergies are possible between the different categories of tourism enterprises and other economic activities (forestry, mining, agriculture, etc.)? How to optimise logistical availabilities (especially those of industrial sites) and enhance tourism opportunities outside PAs?
10. How to convince states to invest in natural resource/PA tourism?
11. How to develop a national and sub-regional tourism clientele in PAs?
12. How to train human resources for conservation and tourism?
13. How can the environment be made sufficiently favourable to attract private sector investment in often remote and insecure areas?
14. What are the obstacles to tourism development?
4. How to strengthen the role of local communities and indigenous peoples in the governance and management of PAs?
15. Human-wildlife conflicts? the question of compensation for damage caused by wildlife and also for damage caused by transhumant herds on crops? - What model and approach to promote coexistence in plantations and villages bordering the forests of the Congo Basin?
16. How to ensure the security of goods and people? Reconciling conservation, security and development
17. How to accelerate the implementation of the N'Djaména Declaration from the perspective of biodiversity conservation and the future of protected areas?
18. How can community and private PAs emerge?
19. The issue of the eviction of populations settled in the heart of PAs?
20. Investment in indigenous peoples and local communities - Respect for human rights - participation - co-management etc.?
21. How to deal with discrimination issues?
22. How to accelerate the role of PAs in community development?
23. How to achieve regional norms/standards for complaints management mechanisms for protected areas? What pilot projects are already underway? What experiences/lessons can be learned?
24. How can we increase the place of women in PA decision-making bodies, as well as in management teams?

Recommendations

1. On financing and management effectiveness of PAs in CA: some conclusions:

Recommendations 1: The form of management should be based on an analysis of the framework conditions / threats of the PA. Participative or even community-based management is only possible if the PA is not threatened by armed groups.

Recommendation 2:

Given the advantages of co-management and delegated management models of PAs in Africa, the CBFP partners encourage government partners as well as NGOs and donors to promote these models of governance and to establish the necessary laws and policies that will allow for these models to spread in the region. They should meanwhile ensure that national capacities development should be part of the agreement.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen professionalism in PA management in Central Africa through training and appropriate remuneration of eco-guards.

Recommendation 4: Government budgets will in the foreseeable future not be able to fully cover the expenses of a protected areas network that will cover at least 30 % of land, sea and water as most countries have committed to. Reason why, we strongly encourage the CBFP's partners states and non-states actors to develop new strategies and financial mechanisms to fund these networks.

Recommendation 5: we encourage CBFP's partners states to support the creation/establishment of A Pan-African Conservation Trust (A-PACT) which would address this gap in Africa through a private, legally independent sustainable financing mechanism for Africa's 8500+ protected and conserved areas (P&CAs).

Recommendation 6: the CBFP's partners encourages new conservation finance mechanisms for long-term funding of PAs that combines money from international donors with commitments from local governments for long-term support of protected areas. ARPA for life in the Amazon is a successful example.

Recommendation 7: The financing of PAs and their management according to Public Private Partnership (PPP) principles have proven their effectiveness and impact in countries with different socio-economic and security contexts. The implementation of sustainable and efficient PPPs nevertheless requires a strong ownership of the principles and modalities of PPP by governments, private partners and relevant public financing institutions. In particular, we restate the following recommendations; governments should (1) ensure an enabling legal-procedural environment; and (2) prepare delegated management contracts systematically; (3) private partners should render themselves dispensable through capacity building of national managerial staff and by initiating sustainable financing mechanisms; (4) governments and private partners alike should respect human rights and build coalitions with communities; (5) governments, private partners and funders should strive to delegate non-core management tasks, such as tourist guiding and reception, community development and research, to specialized locally based individuals and organizations

1. On a favourable environment and meeting the 30% PA target
 - Importance of focusing on CA area already under conservation
 - The problem is not quantity (area), but quality
 - Increase funding, improve management, and focus (limited) resources on more limited areas (strategic retreat).

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1. On a favourable environment and meeting the 30% PA target
 - Importance of focusing on CA area already under conservation
 - The problem is not quantity (area), but quality
 - Increase funding, improve management, and focus (limited) resources on more limited areas (strategic retreat).
- A positive objective that the countries of the region could promote at the international level through advocacy that is at least as strong as that relating to climate change (= opportunity for countries to appear in a positive, courageous, ambitious light, etc.).
- But obviously it is not about 30% National Parks and Wildlife Reserves: it has to be based on the "Other Effective Conservation Measures per Area" (OECMS)
- Definition according to CBD (decision CBD/COP/DEC/14/8 of November 2018, assumed to be known by all countries in the region) = "a geographically delimited area, other than a protected area, that is regulated and managed so as to achieve positive and sustainable long-term outcomes for the in situ conservation of biological diversity, including associated ecosystem functions and services and, where appropriate, locally relevant cultural, spiritual, socio-economic and other values"

- Through AMCEZs (e.g. linked to HCV), it is possible to strengthen partnerships between conservation actors (PA managers, NGOs) and private forest managers such as FSC concessionaires (e.g. PROGEPP and PROLAB), and some Cynegetic Interest Areas.

- Integration of PAs into landscapes

A resource: https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/quest-ce_qui_compte_web_07sep2021.pdf

1. On tourism development in CA HAs

Since the setting up of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership in 2002, the development of ecotourism in the Congo Basin has been extremely limited relative to ecotourism development around major protected areas in East and Southern Africa. The reasons for this lack of development have been discussed by the the CBFP and other forums on a regular basis and a number of key reports seeking to address this lack of progress have been prepared by different parties (Moman 2006; Telfer 2020; xxxx).

It is essential that the CBFP continue to advocate for the necessary enabling conditions to be created by governments, conservation organisations, donors so that the private sector and local communities can actively consider setting up ecotourism enterprises in the region.

Governments and Partners have a critical role in creating political goodwill if they want to use this dormant resource for economic development especially for marginalised communities living near remote forest areas where there are few other opportunities for employment and advancement. Recommendations to overcome key challenges include holding a subject-related presidential summit, easing access to visas, and removing barriers to private aviation. If implemented, such steps could greatly improve the competitiveness of the region and accelerate the development of ecotourism as a viable economic sector also in a challenging political context.

There are three prerequisites for tourism development: quality attractions, good accommodation, and easy access. The central African rainforest countries have incredible attractions, but very little accommodation and very limited to no access. However, over that last decade, there have been several private investors that have taken tentative steps toward pioneering professional ecotourism in Gabon, Republic of Congo, and Central African Republic. These include the Congo Conservation Company's investments in Ozala; their upcoming PPP with WCS/USAID.... TNS, Parc de Virunga....

It is important to recognize that these private businesses are key for sustainable economic development, creating the nascent hospitality industry and marketing tourism products to compete with other destinations in the world.

The Stream Call for the promotion of ecotourism development, national governments in the region need strong policy frameworks, international marketing strategies, and the alignment of the policies of relevant government departments and their actions. The experts all agreed that easing visa requirements, improving access, and marketing the African rainforests are top priorities to accelerate investment and ecotourism development. To generate the required political support, regional partners should convene a presidential summit to promote the benefits of tourism, and to highlight the prerequisites and the concrete steps for accelerating ecotourism development in their countries. Successful leaders could commit to removing hindrances to tourism development and supporting helpful legislation such as prioritizing favorable immigration policy, open sky policies, and fiscal incentives through the provision of tax relief to pioneer investors. A high-level regional group should be formed to initiate the required prerequisites and facilitate legislation that would remove key obstacles to ecotourism development.

It is clear that there are still many challenges to jump starting tourism in the Congo Basin. We call on renewed efforts from political leaders to work at creating a break through at the next CBFP, which will greatly improve the competitiveness of the region and accelerate the development of ecotourism as a viable economic sector. As a catalyst we call on an ecotourism panel to be held during CBFP bringing together appropriate stakeholders.

2. How to accelerate community development and ensure respect for human rights around PAs?

Some highlights:

2. Conclusion on Human Rights: Human rights-based conservation. The Stream supports a conservation that is sensitive to people's rights to use and access natural resources. This is very new for protected areas in Central Africa - lots of people are developing them from scratch and this is important to have some kind of standard and information exchange on this. Developing regional standards for GRMs on the basis of pilot implementation in a few sites would be very good.
3. A conclusion on community involvement / community conservation: Exploring new and innovative governance mechanisms for protected areas that formally define a decision making role for local communities and indigenous peoples - a sort of PPP between the state/local communities. Examples exist in southern Africa Une conclusion sur l'implication des privés.
4. A conclusion on private involvement.

Some recommendations :

5. **Recommendation 1** : Promoting the valorisation and integration of this knowledge and practices in biodiversity conservation policies and programmes and in the management plans of protected areas in the Basin would contribute to an inclusive management of biodiversity and ensure a better involvement of PACLs in conservation initiatives.
6. **Recommendation 2** : Recommendation 2: Promote respect for the right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of LACs in the development and implementation of biodiversity conservation programmes to avoid numerous conflicts around PAs.
7. **Recommendation 3** : **Recommendation 3: Governments and partners should support** and monitor strong social protection mechanisms to support rights-based approaches. At least, social protection mechanisms should include: Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC/CLIP); the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM); the provision of adequate support to take appropriate 'preventive' and 'responsive' actions to all allegations and human rights violations; at regional and national level, governments and partners should strengthen i) the monitoring of allegations of violations and incidents, ii) the capacity to conduct independent, prompt and credible investigations ('stand-by / surge capacity') and to conduct coordinated and strategic communication among conservation partners iii) the capacity to ensure regular exchanges of experience, aimed at the harmonisation and progressive adaptation of normative, contractual or doctrinal frameworks to the different legal and operational contexts of the sub-region, iv) as well as the implementation of a systematic training system suitable for different types of conservation staff (and partners). At the site level, it will also be necessary to i) strengthen or set up coordination, alert and community mediation mechanisms adapted to the operational context and the means allocated to each site; ii) strengthen the protection of victims and witnesses of incidents and violations caused by protected area staff, iii) further support access to justice for victims as well as the actions of the criminal justice system and particularly of prosecutors - the main vector for deterrence but also for the judicial treatment of proven violations. It is proposed that an explicit "protection of civilians and human rights" strategy be developed and implemented in PAs simultaneously at the regional level for the core actions of prevention, monitoring, investigation and strategic communication, and at the KLCD level for the protection of local communities and indigenous peoples, as well as disciplinary and judicial responses to incidents.

Recommendations for COP 15

- Importance of emphasizing on CA area already under conservation
- Problem is not quantity (area), but quality
- Increase funding, improve management, and focus (limited) resources on more limited areas (strategic retreat).

1 – To meet the States' commitment to acquire a Protected Area network representing the main ecosystems (green and blue) on 30% of their national territory, and to be able to bear the costs, CBFP members encourage the development of new strategies and new financing mechanisms based in particular on partnership and the delegation of management to the private market sector (hunting and tourism concessionaires, logging and tourism companies, etc.), The CBFP members encourage the development of new strategies and financing mechanisms based in particular on partnership and delegation of management to the private market sector (hunting and tourism concessionaires, logging, agricultural and mining concessionaires, and communal forest managers) and non-market sector (public managers and conservation NGOs), and on new opportunities regarding payments for environmental services (biodiversity, carbon, water).

2 – To enable rapid development of the various tourism segments within the multiple Central African ecosystems, CBFP members encourage States to facilitate the issuing of visas, to ease access to protected area complexes for all, to free up air traffic for small private operators, to facilitate and secure private investment in accommodation and tourism services within the framework of long-term partnerships, to offer tax benefits to investors in difficult areas and to strengthen the safety of goods and people.

3 – To allow better integration of protected areas into their economic and social environment and to limit the emergence of conflicts between stakeholders, neighbouring populations and wildlife, CBFP members encourage States to develop "landscape" approaches integrating central and decentralised public stakeholders, and private concessionaires and managers of forest and ecologically fragile areas, in a coordinated mechanism of territorial governance.
