Project of Independent Observer in Support of Forest Law Enforcement in Cameroon

Approved by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry

Report of the Independent Observer
No. 076En

Central Control Unit – Independent Observer Joint Mission

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Title: None
Location: Ngoro Sub-Division, Mbam and Kim Division
Mission date: 21-25 July 2003
Companies: Ets. Flamboyant, individuals

Independent Observer Team (Global Witness):
Mr Reiner Tegtmeyer, Project Director
Mr Serge C. Moukouri, Technical Assistant
Mr Albert Mballa Mbarga, Driver
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The control and investigation missions programme conducted in the Haut-Nyong Division took the Central Control Unit (CCU) and the Independent Observer (Global Witness) to the “Mouangue-le-Bosquet Community Forest” (CF), on 19 August 2003. The objective of this phase was to confirm or disclaim the conclusions of a mission report of the Divisional Delegation of the Environment and Forestry (DDEF) for Haut-Nyong testifying that the beneficiaries of the CF concerned were not respecting the prescriptions of the Simple Management Plan (SMP) of that Community Forest.

The Mouangue community was granted the “Mouangue-le-Bosquet Community Forest” following the approval of its SMP and the signing of its management agreement in August 2000. Exploitation of this forest was carried out thanks to support received from the “Soutien au Développement Durable de Lomié” (SDDL) Project executed by the Dutch development assistance organisation SNV, the Netherlands Co-operation Service. Since the end of the pilot phase, the community has signed two partnership contracts with private operators.

The DDEF for Haut-Nyong, through a letter dated 28 January 2003, reported that administrative documents were poorly recorded, revenues of the CF poorly managed and prescriptions of the SMP not respected.

The mission held discussions with the operations manager of the said CF, in the presence of members of the community. The logging site of the CF was inactive during the visit of the mission that noted the following:

- The management of this community forest is facing some major problems; those in charge of managing the funds of the CF do not, for example, have an account book;
- The execution of some construction works envisaged in the SMP has not yet kicked-off.

Consequently, the Independent Observer recommends that awareness, education and training activities for members of this community be carried out by the various services involved in monitoring the activities of this community forest.
2. RESOURCES USED
- 1 Toyota Hilux Pick up
- 1 Yamaha 100 motorbike
- 3 GPS (Garmin brand)
- 1 Video camera (Sony brand)
- 1 Laptop computer (Sony brand)
- 1 Videotape recorder

3. COMPOSITION OF THE MISSION
Besides the two members of the technical team of the Independent Observer, the mission was made up of Mrs Essono Danièle and Mr Djibrila, agents of the CCU; Mr James Afene Obam, Senior staff at the Forestry Department; the Chief of Forestry Section for Haut-Nyong and a representative of the Head of the Local Forestry Post for Lomie.

4. CONSTRAINTS
The mission did not visit the operation site but concentrated its investigations on discussing with the managers of the CF.

5. MISSION’S FINDINGS

5.1 Case summary
The Mouangue Community Forest (CF) is managed by the Mouangue community. During the project’s inception, the community received organisational, material and financial support from the Dutch development assistance organisation SNV - through its “Soutien au Développement Durable de Lomié” (SDDL) Project. The SDDL Project put at the community’s disposal material and resources required to start logging operations. This project also undertook the marketing of the logging operation’s products. As the partnership with the SDDL Project ended, the community signed two contracts with other partners. These contracts were cancelled because they failed to meet the aspirations of the community.

A control mission of the DDEF for Haut-Nyong concluded, on 13 December 2002, that this community forest was being poorly managed (see Appendix).

5.2 Discussions with those in charge of logging operations in the CF
The person in charge of forestry activities in the Mouangue CF acknowledged that some of the activities envisaged in the Simple Management Plan (SMP) were not yet completed. Allegedly, this was because of a change in the mode of the CF’s exploitation having affected the revenues. At the time the SMP was being elaborated, extraction of logs was programmed before being put into question. The
discussions, furthermore, revealed that the management of the funds derived from the exploitation of this forest shows problems of accountability.

As it is the case with most community forests, the Mouangue community subcontracts logging activities of its community forest to a partner which is also the buyer of the extracted timber. The implications of this type of partnership on the revenues of the communities are still to be established, given that the logger may underestimate the volume of wood produced.

The acts denounced by the DDEF are indicative of the shady areas in the management of the Mouangue Community Forest and may serve as an illustration of how low the participation of members of communities is in present-day management of their community forests.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The mission noticed that:

- The management of this community forest is facing some major problems; those in charge of managing the funds of the CF do not, for example, have an account book;
- The execution of some construction works envisaged in the SMP has not yet kicked-off.

Consequently, the Independent Observer recommends that awareness, education and training activities for members of this community be carried out by the various services involved in monitoring the activities of this community forest.
APPENDICES
Appendix

MINISTERE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT ET DES FORETS

DELEGATION PROVINCIALE DE L'EST

DELEGATION DEPARTEMENTALE DU HAUT-NYONG

BP : 38 Abong-Mbang.

MINISTERE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT ET DES FORETS

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN

PAIX-TrAVAIL-PATRIE

DELEGUE DEPARTEMENTAL DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT ET DES FORETS DU HAUT-NYONG A

- ABONG-MBang-

A CONSUER LE RESPONSABLE DES OPERATIONS FORESTIERS DE MOUNGE LE BOSQUE A

- LONIE-

Monsieur,

J'ai l'honneur de vous faire connaitre les conclusions de la mission de... qui a séjourné dans votre Communauté le 13 Décembre 02.

Il ressort ainsi du rapport de ladite mission que malgré l'intense activité d'exploitation, les documents administratifs sont mal tenus. La production n'a pas pu être quantifiée, les revenus de la vente des bois vous ont cependant permis de mettre sur pied deux palmeraies de 185 et 200 plantes actuellement abandonnées dans la brousse. En dehors de cette réalisation, toutes les autres obligations prescrites pour la période écoulée n'ont pas encore connue un début d'exécution. De plus, des vives tensions découlant de la prescription de détournement sont perceptibles chez certains membres de votre Communauté.

Vous conviendrez avec moi que pour la suite des activités, le retour de la serenité est impératif, en plus, toutes celles contenues dans le plan simple de gestion que vous avez librement élaboré et signé devront être réalisées. Faut-il pour vous respecter ces engagements, l'Administration des Forêt sera dans l'obligation de retirer sa confiance à votre Communauté.

Tout en vous rassurant de notre collaboration, Veuillez agréer, Monsieur, nos vœux les meilleurs pour l'année 2003.

AMILIAVION :
- DINEP/DP/CFC/YDE 1
- DLP/DE/BERNOU 1 RC
- DLP/IV/ABN-MBG 1
- DLEP/DREF/LONIE Ip. information
- C/PFC/LONIE Ip. suivi

MINISTERE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT ET DES FORETS
PONCTUEL ARRIVE/UCC

ABONGBANG, le

LE DELEGUE DEPARTEMENTAL
Veuillez recevoir, cher Monsieur, nos vœux de santé et de prospérité pour l'année 2003.

AMITIÉS:
- MINEF/DF/CFC/YDE
- DPFE/BERTOUA
- PREFET/HN/AMB-MBG
- SOUS-PREFET/LOMIE
- C/PFC/LOMIE
- PGR
- POUR INFORMATION
- POUR SUITE

Abonné

29 JAN. 2003

[Stamp: REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN / DIRECTION DE L'AMENAGEMENT DU FORET]
[Stamp: LE DELEGUE / INSPECTEUR DES EAUUE AFORETS ET CHASSE]