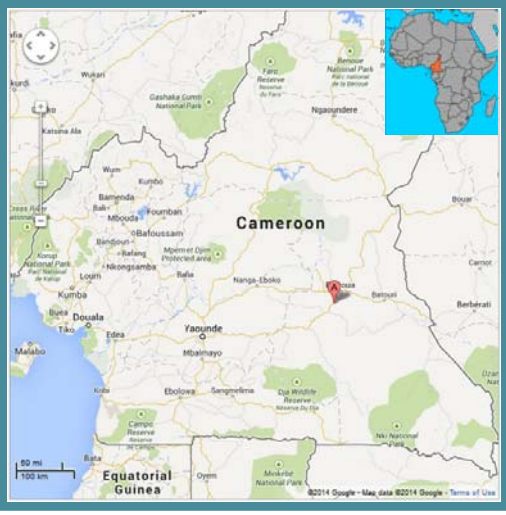
ITTO-IUFRO-FORNESSA PROJECT

Reducing Deforestation and Forest Degradation and Enhancing Environmental Services from Forests (REDDES)

Pilot Site in Cameroon



*"Collaborative participation to fight forest resource degradation in the **Dimako District, Cameroon**"*

- Area: 750 000 ha
- Altitude: 640 m
- Slope: <15 %
- Average annual rainfall: 1 500 mm
- Average annual temperature: 24 °C
- Climate: Equatorial Guinea

Context

With support from the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), IUFRO-SPDC (International Union of Forest Research Organization-Special Programme for Development of Capacities) and FORNESSA (Forestry Research Network of Sub-Saharan Africa) have embarked on a new project on REDDES (Reducing deforestation and forest degradation and enhancing environmental services from forests) addressing the challenges of deforestation and forest rehabilitation in Africa. The project aims at generating scientific information on specific pilot areas in Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria, and disseminating this information to policy makers and forest practitioners at the national and regional level.

To this end, national expert groups composed of scientists from various fields have been in the process of conducting comprehensive scientific assessments in the pilot areas. The whole range of aspects such as natural resource, socio-economic situation and institutional environment, has been covered.

Based on these independent assessments and analyses, specific strategies and actions have been formulated for each pilot area.

Pilot Site

The pilot site in Cameroon is located in the Dimako district and has an area of 750 000 ha. There are three distinct types of vegetation cover: the dense semi-caducous forest, the degraded forest and the swampy forest. The indigenous people consider the forest as community property and use it as such. The forest was subjected to industrial exploitation for about 55 years, therefore the primary forest has disappeared giving way to secondary forest vegetation.

The main activities are agriculture,

Forest exploitation in the communal forest of Dimako

Illegal logging in the Dimako District

Communal forest nursery Dimako

REDDES

hunting and the exploitation of timber and NTFPs (Non Timber Forest Products). Three ethnic groups are present, the Bakoums, the Pols and the Baka pygmies. They have free access to the forest to collect NTFP such as berries, fruits, mushrooms or insects. Around 400 jobs in the region are maintained through the gathering of NTFP. However, agriculture and the exploitation of NTFP are very important for local communities to ensure food security and are also one of the main sources of income for many people.

The social vulnerability of the Baka Pygmies

State of Landscape Degradation

The main drivers of deforestation and landscape degradation in the Dimako District are attributed to:

- expansion of farmlands and road construction;
- illegal logging and unsustainable timber exploitation;
- corruption of forest guards;
- slash and burn agriculture;
- unsustainable extraction of non-timber forest products; and
- illiteracy.

REDDES Strategies

While similar problems can be identified among the pilot sites, site-specific solutions have to be developed in order to be effective.
In Cameroon, the strategies proposed and agreed upon by all stakeholders are the following:

1. Establish a **participator**y forest management.
2. Enhance the practice of **agro-forestry**.
3. Exploit the forest according to a **management plan**.
4. Application of **FLEGT** (Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade) by installing check-point at the entrance of the forest to control poaching and illegal tree felling. Fight against corruption.
5. Protection of **rare species** through the exclusion of rare species exploitation such as moabi (Baillonella toxisperma).
6. Implement **fire managemen**t strategies such as the creation of fire belts to prevent passage of fire from the exterior to the interior of the forest.
7. Educate people on **sustainable collection** of NTFPs. Developing sustainable management plan for NTFPs.

Moabi (Baillonella toxisperma) in the agroforestry system in Dimako

Conclusion

The success of this project is largely due to the strategy of integrating forest stakeholders and policy makers at a common forum. Indeed, the lack of involvement of forest communities has been identified as a strong factor of forest degradation. By now, those strategies and proposed activities are left to policy-makers. They have the mission to implement them at their respective local levels. One way forward is to assist the communities, by practically implementing a few REDDES activities such as **training in sustainable collection and marketing of NTFP and agroforestry practices**.

« Involving local communities in forest management processes. »

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