

**PROGRAMME FOR SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL  
RESOURCES IN THE SOUTH WEST PROVINCE OF CAMEROON  
(PSMNR-SWP)**

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*Report of a field mission for the establishment of a Council Forest  
(CF) in the Nguti Council Area- Team A*

*Sensitisation and boundary identification mission for the creation of the Nguti  
Council Forest.*

**1.0 Introduction**

The establishment and management of a Council Forest (CoF) is an expectation of the PSMNR-SW under its **result three**. Following earlier investigation on potential sites for the creation of a council forest, a workshop was organised in Nguti in March 2007, bringing together chiefs and/or representatives as well as other stakeholders concerned with the creation and management of a Council Forest in Nguti.

At the end of the Nguti workshop, a follow-up action plan was prepared by participants to guide further activities leading to the creation of the council forest. Among these activities was the execution by a technical team, of a field visit to the concerned area. This report is a summary of the field activities.

**2.0 Objectives of the mission**

This mission had three main objectives:

- Further sensitise local inhabitants on the legal provisions of creating and managing a council forest as stipulated by the 1994 Forestry Law;
- Collect relevant GPS Points on agreed boundaries of the Council Forest;
- Document relevant socio-economic information.

### **3.0 Method**

The field mission was executed from the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2007 to the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2007. The team was comprised of;

- The Chief of Forestry and Wildlife Post Baro, Mr. Boya Benjamin;
- Technical Staff of the Provincial Delegation MINFOF, Buea Mr. Besong Simon;
- GFA Technical Adviser, Mr. Frank Stenmanns;
- Local Facilitator and representative of the Nguti Council, Mr. Tabi Napoleon.

The villages concerned were: Baro, Osirayib, Sikam and Ayong. In each village, a general village meeting was organised in the Community Hall or Chief's residence (for villages without a Community Hall) bringing together all inhabitants, with the coordination of the Village Traditional Council. All meetings were guided by the following general agenda:

- Introduction formalities;
- Introduction of the PSMNR-SW and support to Council Forest management by Frank;
- Creation and management of council forest: benefits and responsibilities by Besong;
- Questions and Discussions;
- Identification and agreement on boundaries;
- Arrangements for field visit if necessary;
- Closing.

At the end of every village meeting and after agreeing on the boundaries, a field visit was executed (depending on the need) to the main boundary points were GPS Points and other relevant ecological information was collected. This field trip was always facilitated by local field guides assigned by the Village Traditional Council.

Also, while in each village, appropriate socio-economic data was collected. The team spent between one and one and a half days in each village.

## **4.0 Results**

### *4.1 Notion of Council Forest Management*

Just like the communities of the Mundemba Council Area, the concept of council forest management is also alien to the villages visited in the Nguti Council Area. However, most villages visited are aware of the possibilities of managing their forest areas as Community forests (thanks to the Korup Project) but appreciate the numerous weaknesses of their traditional institutions which make the successful completion of the process nearly impossible. In fact, a village like Baro had earlier identified a forest area to be managed as a Community Forest (CF) while Osirayib had been partly involved in the process of establishing a Community Forest to be managed through REPACIG CIG which they now disapprove.

With the above background, the team's sensitisation strategy was aimed at explaining clearly the process leading to the establishment of a Council forest, its management including the responsibilities of the different stakeholders, benefit sharing mechanisms etc. Since all the presentations were organised to provide answers to envisaged pertinent worries of the local inhabitants, the team was able to convince inhabitants of all villages visited on the advantages of managing the common forest area as a CoF.

However, the first sensitisation meeting at Ayong village was not very successful because of the strained relationship that exists between the village and the Nguti Council. The village accused the Council of embezzling their share of royalties from the last exploitation in the area. In the second short meeting that was convened at the request of the village, the inhabitants pledged their total support to the process of establishing and managing the CoF. On their part the team members advised the Traditional Council to gather all relevant documents pertaining to the said exploitation royalties and present them to the future Council management.

Without raising any hopes, the inhabitants of the four villages visited could clearly situate the envisaged contribution of CoF to the development of their villages in particular and the local region in general. They thanked the management of the PSMNR-SW for including their villages in the programme intervention area and hoped that this lofty initiative will not be allowed to die prematurely.

## *4.2 Proposed Council Forest Area*

### *4.2.1 Boundaries of the Forest.*

Farming is the main activity prohibited in a CoF. As a result, the boundaries must be agreed with the understanding that there exist enough land outside to cater for the present and future agricultural needs of the local inhabitants.

Based on information from satellite images and other sources therefore, a map showing the potential area was prepared for use as a guide for discussions during the meetings.

The longest stretch of the boundary as agreed is bounded by the River Bake which is common to all the villages. GPS Points were collected for non-river boundary points at Baro and Osirayib.

### *4.2.2 Description of the forest*

The forest which is part of the proposed Nkwende Hills (as per Plan de Zonage phase V) has a surface area of about 10,000 hectares (see annexe 1). It falls within the tropical lowland rainforest, is generally flat (with altitudes around 300m asl) with a network of small streams most of which empties mainly into the rivers Bake and Oyi. The soils are generally lateritic but with a clayey component which is significant in certain areas like along the Osirayib-Baro road.

Primary forest constitutes about 90% of the total area while the remaining is made up of advanced secondary forest especially along the Baro-Sikam farm to market road project which was fairly executed some twenty years ago. This

road which is presently out of use because of a lack of bridges and no maintenance could be use during exploitation.

Common timber species in this forest include *Lophira alata*, *Terminalia superba*, *Terminalia ivorensis*, *Milicia excelsa*, *Piptadeniastrum Africana*, *Baillonella toxisperma*, *Nauclea dederrichii*, *Pterocarpus soyauxii* etc.

#### 4.3 Socio-economic situation

Three villages of this proposed CoF area (Baro, Sikam, Ayong) fall within the Upper Balong tribe of the Nguti Council Area in Kupe-Muanengouba Division of South West Province. The fourth village (Osirayib) is of the Ejagham tribe.

These four villages have a resident population of about 1,000 inhabitants, with all main accessible roads (the product of past timber exploitation in the area) in dire need of rehabilitation.

Social infrastructure development is poor in the area: most depend on the Manyemen and Nguti Health Institutions for medical attention as the Ayong Health Centre still remains understaffed and lacks basic equipment; three of the villages (except Osirayib) have primary schools but with innumerable problems; non of the villages has pipe-borne water and all depend on the Manyemen and Nguti markets to sell their forestry and agricultural products.

In all the villages visited, agriculture is the main stay of the inhabitants. While some crops are grown mainly for home consumption like cassava, cocoyams, maize, yams etc, others like coffee, cocoa oil palms are grown mainly for cash earnings.

Animal husbandry is still rudimentary, free ranging of livestock very common. Common species reared; fowls and goats are mainly kept for use during cultural festivals and other traditional occasions and not as a major source of income.

Fishing mainly for subsistence is also practiced by the males in all villages using nets mostly in the main rivers and big streams. The use of chemicals for fishing is a practice which the traditional institutions are still trying to combat.

Hunting, using fire arms and traps (of various types) is a tradition and general practice of the men folk. Common species hunted include duikers and deers (*Cephalophus spp*), porcupines (*Atherurus spp*) and Pangolin (*Phataginus spp*).

The harvesting and sales of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) from the wild is also a common pre-occupation of the inhabitants. NTFPs commonly harvested for sale include bush manago (*Irvingia spp*), eru (*Gnetum spp*), ngangsa (*Ricinodendron heudelottii*) and ngabe oil (*Bailonella toxisperma*).

Generally, the level of scholarisation in this area is low and this has a negative impact on the local village organisation. This notwithstanding, the inhabitants still exhibit a strong inclination to their traditional institution, the Traditional Councils which are at the centre of all development initiatives in the villages. This commitment was especially apparent in Baro, Osirayib and Sikam villages.

#### 4.4 Proposed area and PSMNR-SW Result Four

The PSMNR-SW **Result 4** in this programme intervention zone deals with the elaboration and part implementation of Village Development Plans (VDPs) for villages that have a direct impact on the Korup National Park (KNP). All the four villages visited severally and individually impeach on the smooth management of the national park. Baro village for example is less than three kilometres from the national park boundaries, has received some assistance from the Korup Project but the assistance was not well prioritised leading to the death of these initiatives with the termination of the Korup Project. There is a need for the PSMNR-SW to revitalise development efforts in these villages (through the elaboration of VDPs) to prepare the way for sustainable use of resources in the KNP as well as the judicious use of envisaged revenue from the management of the proposed Nguti Council Forest.

## **5.0 Recommendations**

For a successful follow-up of the process of establishing and putting in place a management structure for the Nguti Council Forest, the following recommendations

(not exhaustive) are worthy:

- A joint meeting of the PSMNR-SW and the Nguti Council should be organised by the end of August 2007 for a proper planning and responsibility sharing among the main stakeholders;
- PSMNR-SW Result 4 activities should be extended to this area;
- The Nguti Council should improve her relationship with the concerned villages in order to build the needed mutual confidence for a strong collaborative management of resources within the CoF.