

**Strengthening communication, cooperation and  
collaboration to benefit bonobo conservation in DR  
Congo**

**Proposals for Conservation Challenge Working Group III**

***“Solutions for better integration and collaboration between bonobo  
conservation, other sectors and global issues”.***

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## Executive Summary

This report presents a summary of opportunities for bonobo conservation NGOs working in DR Congo to engage with larger national, regional and global initiatives working in both environment and development sectors. This is in response to concerns that a narrow focus on single-species conservation may result in missed opportunities for larger impacts from partnerships with other sectors with overlapping goals and for additional funding.

A number of key factors impede the ability of bonobo NGOs to engage directly with a wide range of stakeholders and processes. Some of the most important ones are:

- the limited levels of trust and “social capital” that exist between NGOs working in DR Congo on bonobo conservation
- the limited capacity of government to manage, oversee and co-ordinate inter-disciplinary forums and platforms

A proposal has been made by the facilitator of Conservation Challenge Working Group I, that government create and host a bonobo forum which would be supported by a national secretariat within either ICCN or Ministry of Environment, and which would oversee the implementation of the bonobo conservation action plan.

While it is important to create some kind of platform between government and the NGOs working towards bonobo conservation it is important to reflect on government’s own co-ordination capacity. It may be unrealistic to establish a forum exclusively for bonobo conservation, as other interest groups may then lobby for parallel forums for gorillas, chimpanzees, elephants, or other specific species or themes. It may be wiser to look towards more general collaboration between ICCN/Ministry of Environment and NGOs in general, and then see how bonobo conservation can be incorporated within that wider framework. One option for this wider forum is the already existing CoCoCongo (*Coalition pour la Conservation au Congo*), which has been meeting on an annual basis since 2006 and has been established specifically with the objective of improving relationships between ICCN and external partners. It may be possible to facilitate the establishment of a bonobo or great ape chapter within this broader forum as well as exploring how broader involvement of ministry-level staff can be secured.

This review has identified a number of particular, time-bound and output-driven opportunities where if bonobo NGOs are sufficiently organized, important collective gains can be realized. These external opportunities include working with and influencing:

- National REDD-plus strategies and plans to reflect biodiversity conservation (being lead by the National REDD working group)
- The expansion of the protected area system (being lead by ICCN, but in collaboration with NGOs)
- The development of social and biodiversity safeguards for timber concession agreements (being lead by the Ministry of Environment, together with private sector concessionaires and supported by the World Bank)
- Forest law enforcement and governance (FLEG) reforms and negotiations around the Voluntary Partnership Agreement with the EU (being facilitated by the Belgium Technical Co-operation)
- Linking more closely with CARPE (specifically with regard to sharing and dissemination of data and information)

- Securing legal recognition for community protected areas (currently not active, but with sufficient joint action from NGOs could be resolved with government)
- Engaging more directly with poverty reduction processes (mostly at the site / project / field level and the responsibility of individual NGOs)

For this to function effectively, NGOs must first ensure internal organization and communication, so that their collective views can be represented through a single spokesperson, acting on their behalf. The ideal model for such communication would be through a single person, working within one of the member NGOs, who has the mandate and resources to be able to carry out this function in a transparent and accountable manner. This would need to be supplemented by regular communication between the focal person and the wider membership base, to report on progress and to ensure that messages continue to represent the collective views of members. If this is not possible in the short term (due to a lack of a credible individual or organization and the lack of mutual trust between NGOs) a second option is presented that centers around the appointment of a external facilitator who works within and is supported by one of the members, but works on behalf of all.

# **1. Introduction and background**

## **1.1 Aims, objectives and methods**

This report has been produced as an input to an ongoing process supported by Arcus Foundation and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to strengthen collaboration and collective action among national and international NGOs working on the conservation of bonobos in DR Congo. The terms of reference for this assignment were to identify potential opportunities for bonobo organizations to engage with larger national, regional and global initiatives working in both environment and development sectors. This is in response to concerns that a narrow focus on single-species conservation can result in missed opportunities for larger impacts from partnerships with other sectors with overlapping goals and for additional funding.

This assignment was conducted between November 2010 and January 2011. Information used to generate recommendations for this report come from a range of sources. Firstly, an extensive literature review was conducted, including earlier reports the minutes of earlier meetings conducted on the same subject. Secondly, telephone interviews were undertaken with resource persons with expert knowledge on the conservation and development agenda in DR Congo. Finally face-to-face meetings were held with key resource persons following a one-week visit to Kinshasa in December 2010. Meetings were held with representatives from government institutions, bi-lateral and multi-lateral donor agencies, NGOs and the private sector. While in Kinshasa, it was possible for the consultant to attend a one-day meeting organized by Bonobo Conservation Initiative with a cross section of NGO representatives from across DRC, working at the local level on bonobo conservation activities. The meeting was held to discuss the issue of improving public information and awareness, and as a result was directly relevant to the terms of reference of this assignment. Some of the proposals and recommendations presented in this report derive directly from that meeting. Finally, the findings and recommendations presented in this report will be presented at a four day national workshop in Kinshasa in January 2011, and it is hoped that this will generate significant debate and possibly modification of the final recommendations presented.

## **1.2 Background to the assignment**

The Arcus Foundation and USFWS are funding a 3-phase bonobo conservation process which involves a preliminary meeting in the USA, followed by the contracting of consultants to lead several 'Conservation Challenges' working groups, prior to the convening of a stakeholder workshop in Kinshasa, DRC. The preliminary meeting was held in April 2009, and brought together representatives of the major international groups working in bonobo conservation.

One aim of this initial meeting was to seek commitment to a process for developing a coordinated global conservation strategy for bonobos. During this meeting, participants were asked to discuss the challenges that they believe are impeding more rapid progress towards the conservation of bonobos. As a result of this initial meeting – three "Conservation Challenge Working Groups (CCWG) were established with the following aims:

CCWG I *To develop methods and mechanisms for improved coordination and collaboration between those working towards bonobo conservation*

CCWG II *To identify priorities for conservation actions and geographical focus*

*CCWG III To identify opportunities and methods for better integration and collaboration between bonobo conservation and other sectors and global issues*

This consultancy was conceived to support the Conservation Challenge Working Group III (CCWG III - *Solutions for better integration and collaboration between bonobo conservation and other sectors and global issues*) develop and agree proposals on how site-specific bonobo conservation projects can mainstream their work in higher level regional or national initiatives. There is a clear overlap between the first and third working group – as it will not be possible to develop external integration and collaboration before internal cohesion and communication has been achieved. Consequently, although not specifically part of the terms of reference for this assignment, this report builds strongly on the work of CCWG I. Due to the close linkages between these two working groups (with working group I looking at “means” and processes, while working group III looks mostly at “ends”, objectives, opportunities or outcomes), much reference is made in this report to the work of Working Group I, and where relevant, additional recommendations made.

## **2. Analysis**

### **2.1 Problems and underlying causes**

In April 2010, a meeting was held with conservation NGOs and participants were asked to discuss the challenges that they believe are impeding more rapid progress towards the conservation of bonobos. They agreed upon the following key challenges:

- Insufficient communication, and coordination between those currently working towards bonobo conservation.
- Lack of clear and agreed upon priorities for conservation activities and geographic focus
- Insufficient integration of bonobo conservation and other sectors, as well as larger international movements
- Inadequate understanding of the value and importance of bonobos for human survival and development.
- Lack of transparent monitoring of the impacts of conservation programmes.
- Insufficient funding for conservation and for poverty alleviation in the bonobo’s range<sup>1</sup>.

Underlying causes appear to include:

- A weak capacity within government to co-ordinate and oversee the activities of NGOs, as well as to engage meaningfully with external stakeholders
- Conflicts and competition between ICCN and Ministry of Environment over mandate and resources, which in turn makes external co-ordination ineffective
- Competition between bonobo conservation organizations over funding
- Lack of a co-ordinated approach from donors providing funding to bonobo groups exacerbates fragmentation
- Remote locations and poor communications within bonobo project sites constrain effective communication, particularly in a face-to-face setting

The implications of these problems are:

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<sup>1</sup> IUCN/SSC Primate Specialist Group. 2010. *A stronger and more unified bonobo conservation movement: Strengthening Communication, Cooperation and Collaboration to Benefit Bonobo Conservation*

- Organisations work in an isolated manner and in the absence of a common strategy or shared approach, based on strategic plans
- Limited sharing of project lessons, experiences and data
- Limited collective action around common problems – particularly policy related constraints to more effective conservation
- Limited co-ordination with government
- Rather scattered, piecemeal and isolated efforts to conserve bonobos, often working at the level of species conservation, but with limited attention to underlying drivers of habitat loss or change

## 2.2 Previous efforts to address these challenges

CCWG 1 was facilitated by Jose Kalpers. The recommendations from this working group have been summarized in a working group report<sup>2</sup>. Key recommendations in this report are:

- The establishment of a “*cellule de coordination*”, within ICCN or Ministry of Environment (but with both represented) with which to co-ordinate bonobo conservation activities
- The identification of a co-ordinator of this secretariat with responsibility for ensuring liaison and co-ordination
- The establishment of a working group with broad representation from government (national and sub-national), NGO and donors

These recommendations are revisited and further discussed in the following chapter. @

Early in 2010, an external consultant (Ed Wilson) was engaged to launch CCWG III. He facilitated a meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2010 in Kinshasa to which a smaller group of bonobo NGOs were able to attend. This meeting focused on two key issues – firstly, the particular themes or areas that it would focus on and secondly, how it would operate, or function as a group<sup>3</sup>.

The meeting, which was conceived as a “brainstorming” activity proposed a wide range of potential areas in which bonobo organizations could potentially intervene, including:

- policy matters
- education
- broader environmental issues
- science and research
- sustainable conservation financing
- private sector engagement
- education (both environmental and broader primary and secondary education)
- gender
- agriculture
- security
- human rights
- land tenure.

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<sup>2</sup> *Méthodes et mécanismes pour l'amélioration de la coordination et la collaboration entre ceux travaillant à la conservation du Bonobo. Rapport final, José Kalpers. Décembre 2010*

<sup>3</sup> *Coxe, S. and E. Wilson. 2010. Bonobo Conservation Challenge Working Group 3. Meeting Notes taken at the offices of Conservation International, Kinshasa*

Secondly, a broad range of institutional models were discussed that would allow the working group to function effectively. This included suggestions focusing on:

- How this working group would collaborate with the other two working groups
- The membership and function of the working group
- The ways in which external relationships could be built (including with government as well as donor agencies and funding bodies such as CARPE)

### **3. Solutions, opportunities and proposals for the way forward**

In this chapter, possible solutions and opportunities are identified that provide incentives for increased collaboration and communication. A range of opportunities are presented that could form the basis for a facilitated discussion at the January 2011 workshop, rather than providing a single solution or recommendation.

As mentioned previously, it is extremely hard to separate the “identification of opportunities” (the TORs for this assignment) with the means for increased communication and collaboration among and between bonobo stakeholders (the focus of TORs for CCWG I). A decision on one has profound implications on the outputs of the other.

This chapter identifies two main strategies and opportunities for improving co-ordination, collaboration and communication for improved bonobo conservation. The first revolves around establishing a more institutionalized collaboration between bonobo NGOs and government, and builds strongly on the findings of CCWG I. This is followed by a second section, which presents opportunities for bonobo conservation NGOs to become engaged in externally-driven initiatives with potential for collective action and gains. A pre-condition for this to be realized, however, is coherent and accountable internal organization within and among bonobo NGOs, so that a single and unified message can be communicated.

#### **3.1 Improving collaboration, communication and co-ordination between bonobo NGOs and government**

Following the development of a joint action plan for the conservation and management of bonobos in DR Congo, it will be important to identify some kind of institutional mechanism that can oversee its implementation with broad representation from both government and NGOs.

The final report for CCWG I proposes the establishment of a “*cellule de coordination*”, within ICCN or Ministry of Environment (but with both represented) with which to co-ordinate bonobo conservation stakeholders. This would be supported by a working group, composed of stakeholders from different interests (such as NGOs, donors and potentially the private sector).

While the idea for this platform is important, it is important to first see how such a proposed new institutional structure might complement or conflict with any existing arrangements established by government for liaison and communication with external stakeholders. One such institution is “CoCoCongo” (Coalition pour la Conservation au Congo), which has been meeting on an annual basis since 2006 and has been established specifically with the objective of improving relationships between ICCN and external partners<sup>4</sup>. Any proposed solution from bonobo

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<sup>4</sup> For example, see: Sixième réunion annuelle de la Coalition pour la Conservation au Congo “CoCoCongo”, Hôtel Memling Kinshasa, du 30 au 31 Mars 2010



interests must clearly link to and support this broader process if it is to achieve a mandate and legitimacy. One possible option might be the creation of some sub-working group of CoCoCongo with a more narrowly defined interest on bonobo or great ape conservation. This sub-group could then meet separately, and ensure that key messages for government are fed into annual CoCoCongo meetings with government.

One of the more significant challenges facing bonobo conservation NGOs as they begin to establish more formalized links between themselves and government is that apparent conflicts that exist between ICCN on one hand and the Ministry of Environment on the other. Overlapping mandates, coupled with a competition for external financial resources have soured relationships between the two agencies. While staff at the Ministerial level have a arguably greater political mandate, represent the interests of the forestry and conservation sectors and also have a mandate to conserve biodiversity (and endangered species such as bonobos) outside protected areas, ICCN clearly has greater technical capacity and fulfils an important role in terms of overseeing the management of protected areas. The problem is further accentuated by the very limited real capacity of either institutions to engage externally as well as the very meagre human and financial resources available to them.

Clearly, there will be a need to ensure co-ordination and linkages with both ICCN and the Ministry of Environment on bonobo conservation, to ensure the mandates of both institutions are supported. The experience of the Great Ape Survival Programme (GRASP) is a useful lesson in terms of avoiding a focus on a single institution. In 2005, this UN-supported programme facilitated a process of developing a national strategy and action plan for the conservation of DR Congo's great apes<sup>5</sup>. The document is well-written and contains useful strategies and actions. However, the failure of the process to create ownership beyond staff at ministry level has meant that it remains largely unimplemented and unknown within DR Congo.

### **3.2 Improving interaction between bonobo NGOs and externally-driven processes**

#### **3.2.1 Improving co-ordination between bonobo NGOs**

In this section, a range of externally-driven and time-bound opportunities are presented, of direct relevance to bonobo conservation interests, where collective gains can be realized through increased collaboration. For these advantages are to be taken advantage of, however, requires first that bonobo conservation NGOs are able to more effectively collaborate, communicate and co-ordinate internally. An improved mechanism for communication is a precondition for all that follows in this chapter. Without broad agreement on this, there is little point in pursuing this process further.

Given the number and dispersal of the many NGOs working on this issue across remote parts of DR Congo, a more coherent and unified voice needs to be developed and communicated through a single channel. Currently, there are significant levels of mistrust and even conflict between NGOs and as a result, any kind of collective communication is highly challenging. Perhaps the most effective way in which this could be achieved, would be through the identification of a focal point who could act on behalf of the wider group. For this to function effectively, it would be necessary to ensure that:

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<sup>5</sup> Democratic Republic of Congo. 2005. Strategy and Action Plan for the Survival of Great Apes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation, Water and Forests

- the identification of such a focal point (or focal points) is done in a transparent manner
- the focal point, although probably based within a NGO network member, does not represent the interests of his/her own organization, but those of the wider network (including both national and international NGOs)
- additional financial resources are identified through which this focal point can effectively fulfil their mandate
- given that many organizations are based in the field, some kind of internal communication system is put in place to allow the flow of information from organizations to the focal point and back again. The most effective way in which this could be done is through face to face, roundtable meetings (perhaps as some kind of sub-working group of CoCoCongo – ref 3.1), to allow for inter-member dialogue. Experiences with the establishment of a “google-group” has shown that email based communication tends to be a relatively weak mechanism for encouraging dialogue and agreement between members of the network<sup>6</sup>
- clear goals and outputs are identified, which are collectively agreed upon, and which provide the mandate for the focal person to pursue specific issues
- a system of internal accountability and communication is put in place, to allow the focal person to keep the wider group informed of progress, achievements and setbacks

With these general principles in mind, below are a few options that, if implemented would provide solutions to some of the challenges:

- **Option 1:** The identification of an individual NGO that could represent the interests of all others. This NGO should be one with a track record of working with a range of external stakeholders such as government or the private sector, and ideally already engaged in external networking and communication. It should have a presence in Kinshasa but also a strong field presence that allows it to identify with national as well as local issues. The NGO should have the confidence of other bonobo group members, who feel confident that it would be able to represent common group interests, rather than those of the individual NGO. Meetings held on a semi-annual basis would allow for planning and reporting processes between the lead NGO and the wider group.
- **Option 2:** A small secretariat is created to represent the wider group members. This could be a small sub-group of the wider bonobo NGO community. It could perhaps include one or two international NGOs and one or two national NGOs. One organization should be tasked as the lead organization – and could potentially administer the process, through receipt of external network funding, as well as accounting for specific activities (meetings, policy briefs and so on). Meetings held on a semi-annual basis would allow for planning and reporting processes between the lead NGO and the wider group.
- **Option 3:** Independent facilitator engaged to represent NGO group. Option 3 assumes that NGOs are unable to agree a primary “lead” NGO or small group of lead NGOs (options 1 and 2) and an external, independent co-ordinator of the bonobo network is therefore needed, who could potentially be housed and supported by an individual NGO member. While this is far from perfect, in a climate of low levels of trust, it does provide an intermediary option and can be a confidence-building exercise while a more permanent and internal solution is sought for the longer term. This model was a solution used by donors who wanted to engage with humanitarian NGOs when civil disturbances were at their peak some years back, but when internal co-ordination was deemed impossible.

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<sup>6</sup> *Méthodes et mécanismes pour l'amélioration de la coordination et la collaboration entre ceux travaillant à la conservation du Bonobo. Rapport final, José Kalpers. Décembre 2010*

The London-based International Institute for Environment and Development currently hosts the Poverty and Conservation Learning Group – a loose network of institutions that seek to integrate poverty concerns into conservation and vice versa. They are currently pursuing ideas for establishing country-based “learning groups” in great ape range states, with funding from the Arcus Foundation, following a recent workshop in Masindi, Uganda, to which great ape projects were invited (including some from DR Congo)<sup>7</sup>. Some of the additional costs associated with creating the conditions for effective external collaboration could potentially be covered through support from IIED / Arcus Foundation funding if a workable plan could be developed.

### **3.2.2 Potential opportunities that could drive increased collaboration among bonobo NGOs**

Despite the very many potential themes or issues that bonobo conservation NGOs could potentially engage on (see the list proposed during the March 2010 meeting in Chapter 1 of this report), it will be important, initially at least, to set realistic, achievable targets that respond to priority interests and concerns of bonobo NGOs. Ideally, themes or issues should be screened based on a review of the following questions:

- Is there a strong likelihood of achieving results and meeting objectives?
- Are there policy solutions that are available, readily achievable and with a realistic chance of being implemented?
- Does it address some of the most significant threats to (and / or their underlying causes) to bonobo conservation?
- Is the process likely to attract significant external support or face considerable opposition?
- Are there processes that are lead by external players within which bonobo NGOs could potentially engage?

The opportunities presented below respond positively to many if not all of the above questions or criteria.

#### **REDD and REDD+**

REDD-readiness is being strongly supported by a number of donors in DR Congo – including FCPF (through the World Bank), UN-REDD (through the United Nations) and Congo Basin Forest Fund (through Norway’s Forest and Climate Partnership), to name a few. REDD aims to develop a national process for halting or slowing the rate of deforestation and forest degradation. For this to be effective, it must also address broader issues of forest governance, illegal logging, agricultural expansion, land & forest tenure and local benefits from forest management. All of these issues are critical pre-conditions not just for reducing carbon emissions, but also for conserving bonobos. Working alone, bonobo conservation NGOs would not have the political weight and inertia to be able to influence any of these deep-rooted problems. However, by engaging with the national REDD process (which comes with the promise of significant amounts of external revenue), there is the possibility of influencing the REDD programme in ways that might positive outcomes for bonobo conservation. Of particular interest to bonobo NGOs (and others working on conservation) is the creation of biodiversity safeguards within the national REDD process. This move from a narrow agenda on forest carbon – to wider considerations of social impacts, sustainable forest use and biodiversity

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<sup>7</sup> See: *Linking Great Ape Conservation And Poverty Alleviation: Learning From Experiences And Identifying New Opportunities. Report Of The Poverty And Conservation Learning Group Workshop Masindi, Uganda. November 16th - 19th, 2010*

conservation – is what is generally termed REDD-plus and is very much part of global discussions, as well as at the national level in countries such as DR Congo. Specific opportunities for advocating for the inclusion of biodiversity interests and safeguards are presented below:

- Currently, the national REDD Working Group is calling for the establishment of site-based REDD pilot projects, as a means to develop systems of Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV), benefit sharing models and landscape approaches. Many of the sites proposed for REDD are in areas of high biodiversity – and include populations of bonobos. For example, WWF is currently exploring opportunities for the design and development of a REDD pilot in the Lac Tumba landscape. Much of the forest is outside protected areas, but is still an important bonobo site. Other pilots are being discussed with organizations such as Conservation International. Given the fact that many of the organizations responsible for the implementation of REDD pilots are likely to be conservation NGOs, this means that an important aspect of the piloting process will be to develop and pilot the application of biodiversity safeguards, such as measures designed to conserve endangered species (such as bonobos)
- As part of the national REDD process, a civil society working group has been constituted with which to engage directly with government, and to help shape the development of REDD policies. This is currently being hosted by a national NGO – called Réseau Ressources Naturelles, or RRN. RRN have a strong background of working on forest governance issues in DR Congo and are well placed to lead a coalition of NGOs to engage with government directly. In discussions with RRN, as part of this review, it was clear that they would welcome inputs from bonobo conservation organizations, with an interest to engage on wider issues such as bush-meat trade, biodiversity safeguards, illegal logging and forest tenure – and to identify opportunities for incorporating these concerns into the emerging REDD debate. Despite possible appearances to the contrary, UN-REDD, FCPF and Norad are themselves under considerable external pressure to increase the voice of NGOs within REDD-readiness discussions – and in particular indigenous civil society.

### **Expansion of the national protected area system**

ICCN is planning to expand its system of protected areas, moving from the current level of coverage of 10% of the total land area of the country, to 15%. The process for identifying and gazetted protected areas to date has been somewhat ad-hoc and largely championed by individual NGOs working in a given area. In recognition of this, ICCN, with support from a number of donors (such as BMZ and the World Bank and in collaboration with WWF) are seeking a more deliberate and strategic approach to identifying new sites. This is being done together with a process of assessing opportunities for sustainable financing (through, for example, the establishment of a multi-donor trust fund to cover the long-term costs of protected area management). One of the basic elements of the strategic planning process will be to identify representative ecosystems and to ensure that each ecosystem type is well represented. Currently, WWF have indicated that savanna ecosystems are over-represented and that lowland tropical forest ecosystems are under-represented. This means that it is likely that new protected areas will be identified in forest areas – and potentially in areas with bonobo populations.

To support the process of identification of new protected areas, ICCN is planning to establish a technical working group, which will solicit representation from NGOs working in conservation. This will also require representation from Ministry of Environment and in particular the directorate for forests, to ensure that the protected area plan harmonises with governments own

protected forests, forest zoning plans and concession arrangements. The process is expected to last about two years and will be launched sometime in the first quarter of 2011. This represents a potentially valuable opportunity for bonobo conservation groups to lobby government for the inclusion of key bonobo sites. The work being done by CCWG II on population modelling and bonobo census research could be a valuable input to the broader discussion on protected area identification. Once completed, the planning process is expected to then extend down to the level of individual protected areas. This presents additional opportunities for those NGOs with activities at the local level. By supporting government's own planning process, it will be possible to integrate bonobo priority actions into governments own plans, as well as lobbying for the inclusion of other aspects such as community outreach, benefit sharing and support to local communities. If successful, it would result in a harmonization of government's own plans with those of NGOs, resulting in increased synergy and efficiency.

### **Forest Law Enforcement and Governance / Voluntary Partnership Agreements**

Currently, approximately 75-80% of timber exported from DR Congo goes to European markets. Following the experiences of other West African states such as Ghana and Cameroon, the European Union recently signed an agreement with the government of DR Congo with which to launch negotiations on the establishment of a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA). If successful, this would result in reforms in forest law enforcement and governance (FLEG) within DR Congo by introducing a traceability and legality assurance system, and place considerable demands upon government to improve transparency in the forest sector. Any timber purchased in the European Union from DR Congo would then have to comply with nationally agreed indicators of legality. The negotiation process will be facilitated in DR Congo through Belgian Technical Co-operation and the negotiation period is expected to start early in 2011 and be completed by 2013.

Based on experiences from countries such as Ghana, where the VPA has now been signed and is now being operationalised, it seems likely that there will be significant opportunities for engagement of civil society within the VPA / FLEG negotiations. In the case of Ghana specific opportunities were created for the incorporation of civil society voices from the forest sector, through the establishment of various national and sub-national platforms, and the inclusion of civil society within the negotiation process. Although the exact process and mechanism has yet to be identified for DR Congo, it seems likely that a similar process will be adopted to that followed in Ghana. Once again, if bonobo conservation interests are sufficiently organized and engaged, it will be possible to influence the emerging agenda in ways that favour positive conservation outcomes.

### **Engaging with responsible private sector timber concessions**

DR Congo has a less than impressive track record with regard to supporting sustainable and socially responsible timber operations and has criticized heavily, particularly by northern environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace, FERN and Rainforest Foundation. Over the past half decade, there are more encouraging signs that private forestry companies (and in particular those originating in Europe) are beginning to respond to many of these external criticisms and are now actively seeking opportunities for more sustainable and socially just operations.

The World Bank's country programme in DR Congo includes efforts to improve natural resource management in the forestry sector, through support to government policies and agencies for enforcement of strong environmental standards for logging and the involvement of communities in monitoring forestry activities. In April 2009, the World Bank approved a US\$ 70 million grant to

increase the capacity of the government and other stakeholders to manage forests sustainably for multiple uses in pilot areas of the country. The International Development Association (IDA) is providing a \$64 million of these grant funds and a further \$6 million is being provided by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). As part of this effort, the World Bank is currently supporting a review of the forestry concession system and has helped facilitate a revision of concession guidelines in ways that support local social and economic benefits, and more sustainable harvesting methods. This includes mandatory requirements such as the “*cahiers des charge*” – legally binding social contracts linking concessionaires to neighboring communities that articulate specific obligations and duties. This includes:

- The establishment of a social fund, financed through an agreed revenue sharing scheme, based on the volume and value of timber harvested
- Training of community members to engage in the monitoring of forest harvesting

Furthermore, additional measures are being negotiated regarding environmental standards and safeguards such as:

- Setting aside a minimum of 5% of the total forest concession area to strict protection measures
- Restricting the transport of bush meat on company vehicles and actively discouraging bush meat trade through other means
- The development of sustainable forest management plans

In addition to these mandatory requirements, 4 timber companies are now pursuing certification through the FSC, covering an area of over 4 million hectares. Experiences in neighbouring Republic of Congo indicate that biodiversity values are higher within FSC-managed concession areas than within government-managed protected areas, which are subject to significant illegal logging and hunting.

Although the picture is not all as positive as this (due to widespread and increasing illegal logging from predominantly South and SE Asian timber companies), there are good grounds for cautious optimism. Given that concessions are in forest habitats with known populations of bonobos, there are important opportunities to engage with timber companies in ways that will provide more positive outcomes for bonobo conservation. Some specific opportunities or options include:

- Engaging with the on-going process of negotiations between the Ministry of Environment (Department of Planning) and timber concessions (facilitated with World Bank support) on revisions to the rules and guidelines for timber harvesting. Currently, there are no provisions for wildlife management plans within existing or planned concession guidelines, but this might be an area worth pursuing.
- While it might be unrealistic to expect that timber companies will be likely to accept the additional costs of undertaking wildlife assessments, management plans and monitoring processes, one option might be for conservation NGOs with capacity in these areas to work alongside interested companies (on some kind of cost-sharing basis) to demonstrate that it is possible and to develop low-cost models for replication elsewhere.
- While timber companies are now required by law to establish a social fund, ensuring that the fund functions in an effective, transparent and accountable manner is a complex task, requiring specialist skills that may be lacking within timber companies. However, if community benefits are to be realized (and conservation threats diminished) it will be vital to ensure that these funds are established in ways that deliver early results. In bonobo-rich

areas, working with timber companies on ensuring that the funds operate effectively will be an important priority, and one that might usefully be co-funded by the private sector and external donors

### **Linking more closely to CARPE**

CARPE (the USAID-funded Central African Regional Programme for the Environment) works across 9 countries in central Africa, and constitutes the US contribution to the Congo Basin Forest Partnership. CARPE has facilitated “macro-zone” planning exercises across 146 sites, of which 50 are under community management. Furthermore, CARPE has been compiling an impressive knowledge base of information relating to biodiversity, ecosystem services as well as an catalogue of lessons learned and project experiences. Almost all of the data generated or obtained through the programme is available on the CARPE website – and represents a valuable “clearing house” of data and resources on the Congo Basin. CARPE is now preparing its forward plan for a subsequent phase of funding that would extend the programme life up to 2017.

Although CARPE is essentially a project-driven structure and process, that takes place outside any formal government process within the region, it will represent an important initiative for the sharing of knowledge, information and experiences. For example, CARPE is currently in the process of preparing the next State of the Forest Report (updating the last report from 2008) and welcomes any available data or information on bonobo population levels and dynamics. During a meeting held with CARPE, it was clearly stated that while increasingly NGOs are working in a more collaborative manner with CARPE, with regard to a sharing of knowledge and experiences, significant gaps remain with regard to bonobo NGOs.

### **Community protected areas / community forests**

A strategy that is being pursued by a number of national NGOs working with bonobo conservation is the establishment and development of locally managed protected areas. One example of this is the national NGO Mbou-Mon-Tour who have been working to establish a community protected area in the Lac Tumba ecosystem (at the confluence of the Congo and Kasai rivers) and in partnership with WWF. While MMT has managed to create considerable local level support for the establishment of a community protected area, they have met with challenges when approaching ICCN for the formal gazettment notice, as currently, there is no legal provision for such an area. One suggestion proposed by the NGO is that ICCN formally recognize the existence of the protected area, but delegate its management to local actors.

Another route taken by the Bonobo Conservation Initiative is the application of 2002 Forest Code, which allocates community title over forest land for the purposes of establishing small scale timber harvesting operations (a community forest concession in effect). This process was used to create the Kokolopori Bonobo Reserve<sup>8</sup>. However, there are differences of opinion within the NGO community regarding the best route to take in this regard. Some NGOs (Such as BCI) are advocating for “community concessions” (*concessions des communautés locales*), while others favour community forests (*forêts des communautés locales*) advocated by Forest Monitor<sup>9</sup> and FAO. Some NGO advocates argue that community concessions offer expanded

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<sup>8</sup> L. Alden Almquist, Albert L. Lokasola, Sally J. Coxe, Michael J. Hurley and John S. Scherlis. 2010. Kokolopori and the Bonobo Peace Forest in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Prioritizing the Local in Conservation Practice. *In: Indigenous Peoples and Conservation: From Rights to Resource Management.*

<sup>9</sup> Forest Monitor. 2010. Executive Note. First National Forum: Concepts Related To Community Forests 23 – 24 June 2009

rights analogous to logging concessions, whereas community forests provide only limited community rights.

The multiplicity of approaches and differences of opinion point to the very real need to clarify and harmonise government policy in the area of community managed forest areas in ways that support the conservation of biodiversity while supporting local development. Although currently it is unclear whether government is ready to review forest and conservation policies to clarify the legal steps required for transfer of forest back to local level managers, this appears to be an important area meriting further research, and could potentially be supported by other agencies (such as CARPE) if sufficient momentum was created.

### **Engaging more directly with poverty reduction processes**

Bonobo habitats are found in areas of high poverty, with very limited opportunities for income generation and sustainable livelihoods, beyond the consumption and trade of forest products. Where population densities are low, and consumption is driven by local subsistence demands, this often results in limited impacts on biodiversity conservation. Increasing access to external markets, however, while assisting with increased opportunities for income generation, provides additional risks through unsustainable trade of products such as bushmeat and illegal, unregulated logging.

Clearly then, if bonobo organizations are to respond to these kind of complex patterns of market penetration, there is a need to identify alternative, more sustainable livelihoods, that can compete economically with those provided by unsustainable trade in forest products, as well as helping respond to wider public goods such as education, health, water and sanitation and so on.

Within this context, it is important to consider the ability of conservation organizations to be able to respond to the wide demands for social infrastructure and income generating activities as well as their own organisational capacity for engaging in complex socio-economic processes such as these. At a recent meeting held in Uganda, facilitated by the International Institute for Environment and Development, with the participation of great ape conservation projects from across Africa, one of the major recommendations was the development of partnerships between conservation organizations and development agencies, with mutual interests in addressing sustainable natural resource management and sustainable rural livelihoods<sup>10</sup>. One example of just such an initiative is the growing partnership between CARE International (a large international development NGO) and WWF. In a number of countries, joint programming is now taking place, or being developed, that builds upon the respective competencies and capacities of both organizations. A key lesson learned in this regard is that institutional roles and responsibilities need to be negotiated during programme design, and agreed within the framework of a common set of overall goals and approaches that both organizations subscribe to. Conflicts between organizations often arise when one organization is engaged after the project has been designed, without a transparent discussion about aims, objectives and shared values and goals.

A second key output of the Uganda meeting was the recognition of the need to work not just on general development activities with poverty reduction outcomes, but the need to understand and

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<sup>10</sup> *Linking Great Ape Conservation And Poverty Alleviation: Learning From Experiences And Identifying New Opportunities. Report Of The Poverty And Conservation Learning Group Workshop Masindi, Uganda. November 16th - 19th, 2010*



address social differentiation within participating communities and groups. Communities are not homogenous, but reflect a diverse range of households, with differential access to resources, assets, influence and power. Natural resource dependency also appears to vary heavily according to wealth, with often poorer and more marginalized households being more dependent upon trade and consumption of natural resource products (due to the lack of any real alternative). Therefore the development of a targeted, pro-poor focus and approach, may have important implications not only for addressing conservation threats, but also addressing inequality and social injustices.

Two recommendations emerge from this discussion, but notably both are more likely to be pursued by individual organizations, than through any form of broad-based collective action. These recommendations or opportunities are as follows:

- Identify potential in-country NGO partners with a track record in addressing rural poverty and an interest in sustainable natural resource management. Begin to develop potential jointly-designed projects within areas of high poverty as well as bonobo abundance.
- Assess opportunities for developing a more “pro-poor” approach to rural development, in ways that identifies linkages between natural resource dependence and poverty, and seeks ways for targeting households or groups with high levels of poverty and natural resource dependency

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