

Proposal to CEPF: DRC-64756: Protecting the Ngamikka-Luama Landscape by Establishing Infrastructure and Capacity.

Free Prior and Informed Consultation of Indigenous Peoples

Background to Project

Since 2006 the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) has been working with the local people to improve the conservation of the Misotschi-Kabogo highlands, two biologically important regions.

Misotshi-Kabogo Massif

Surveys conducted by WCS in the Misotshi-Kabogo massif in 2006/2007 identified this area as being of conservation importance with the discovery of six new vertebrate species for the World. Subsequent socioeconomic surveys to all the major villages around the massif identified the extent to which the people living here rely on the forest for their annual incomes. The socioeconomic survey also asked households their interest in protecting the forest and if so how they would prefer it to be protected. About 90% stated that they thought a protected area was a good idea and 60% wanted a national park to be created. In 2009, WCS and ICCN held meetings with the traditional chiefs (Mwamis) of the villages in both Katanga and South Kivu (the provinces which overlap the massif) to present the findings of the biological and socioeconomic research and to discuss options for the conservation of the region's biodiversity. At both meetings the Mwamis voted to create a National park in the region to be called Ngamikka Park (after Nganja, Misotshi, Kabogo cultural sites in the massif). Since that time, WCS has been working with each of the village councils in 91 of the villages (most of them) surrounding the proposed Ngamikka Park (along the lake shore and also along the road between Kalemie and Fizi) to map where the boundaries of the park should be as well as buffer zones and village expansion areas for agriculture. In addition, along the road between Kalemie and Fizi, 253 pygmies have been consulted within 91 Bantu villages.

The boundaries of the park for both Katanga and South Kivu Provinces have been agreed and accepted by the local communities and we are working with the Provincial Ministry for the Environment to gazette the park at the provincial level (a current pre-requisite to establishing a park at the national level in DRC).

Throughout the process we have not applied pressure but have presented the information and asked the people what they would like to see. We had expected they would want a community reserve but they wanted a national park because they felt it would a) bring greater attention to their area and hence potential funding in future, and b) it would be a stronger mechanism for protecting their land against immigrants coming from the north in search of land.

Luama Katanga Reserve

The same consultations and socioeconomic surveys have been made along the primary road bordering the Luama Katanga Reserve (as this road runs between the reserve and Ngamikka Park). We have not collected the socioeconomic data in as much detail for these northern and western boundaries though as the reserve has been established since 1954 and environmental laws pertaining to its management since this time mean that the impacts on people will not change as a result of this project.

Consultations

Consultations have been conducted at several stages of the process to date. The main components included:

1. During the socioeconomic surveys in Ngamikka we asked households about their use of the forest and how it contributes to their national incomes and measured the percentage of income derived from the forest. We questioned people about their interest in creating a protected area and whether they thought it was a good idea or not. Based on these results we were encouraged to follow-up with the consultation meetings at both sites.
2. At meetings in Kalemie and Misisi we presented to the Mwami's of all the villages around the proposed Nagmikka Park information about the biological importance of the place, the results of the socioeconomic study and the interest in creating a protected area, and the various options that are legally available under Congolese law to create a protected area: national park, faunal reserve, natural reserve, hunting reserve and community reserve. They were then given time to discuss amongst themselves in small groups to decide what each group would like to see for their area.
3. In Ngamikka we have undertaken participatory mapping using gender-sensitive approaches by separating men and women and using female facilitators with the women groups to encourage their full participation. These mapping exercises were used to identify three zones for the park: a) areas for village cultivation expansion; b) the park boundaries (core protected zone) c) areas of sustainable use of the forest. This type of approach is planned for Itombwe but has not been undertaken yet as the area is much larger and we wanted to establish the outer boundaries first.

In both cases the communities are asking WCS and its partners to move more quickly in establishing the protected areas, complaining that they have agreed long ago and asking why there is such a delay. We see this as being a clear demonstration of their desire to see the protected areas established. They are also preventing people from settling in the proposed park for now but pressures are increasing as more people move into the region.