

Sustainable solutions to biodiversity conservation, local livelihoods and climate change: Our Korup rainforest story, southwest region, Cameroon

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Abstract

Poor communities are often critically dependent on ecosystem services to sustain their livelihoods occasionally posing threats to biodiversity. Though the arrangement on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other international agreements directly connect biodiversity conservation, poverty mitigation and human well-being, there are substantial debates concerning their relationships. There is therefore growing literature at the interface of rural livelihood improvement and biodiversity specially when compounded by impending effects of climate change. Considering the pitfalls of ICDPs, present-day conservation policies generally focus at a win-win solution that can address all these concerns. Korup is Cameroon's first rainforest national park with well off biodiversity and endemism. Despite last conservation efforts, recent research reveals annual wildlife off takes of over 37000 animals, far above sustainable control for tropical rainforest. This amongst other human threats from local communities is driving vulnerable species to local extinction. Nevertheless, there is still need to recognize peculiarities in approaches, environmental characteristics, models and the communities in which success is most probably.

In developing countries, much remains to be done to truly combine the livelihoods of rural people and biodiversity conservation into land utilizing decision-making and management processes. Yet, research institutions can hold up informed landscape management decisions by communities, conservation agencies and policy-makers. This can be accomplished by developing techniques and instruments that facilitate coherent connection among stakeholders across various spatial and decisional scales. Researchers need to facilitate equitable participation in the planning procedure and provide information on the options that best amalgamate biodiversity conservation and livelihoods.

This workshop is planned to use our Korup example to draw weaknesses, strength, opportunities and potential threats from our model that can guide our team and the conservation group.

This chapter focus to analyse how research has contributed to this objective and how it could be formed for future integrative activities at the landscape level. It recognize lessons from case studies that combine biodiversity conservation and livelihood focuses in tropical regions and reviews methodological issues applicable to transdisciplinary research. In addition to the difficult elements emerging from case studies, the article highlights the crucial role of institutions in helping to bridge the gaps among science, planning, decision-making and effective management. Finally, it narrates an approach that two international research organizations are developing to promote the sustainable use of forests and trees and biodiversity conservation in disintegrate tropical forest landscapes.

As law enforcement escalating becomes less effective as a sole biodiversity shielding measure, we have rolled out an innovative co-management approach; sharing responsibilities and benefits among stakeholders. Our special features are Conservation-Development Agreements (CDAs), Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), Climate Smart Livelihood Measures (CLISLIM) and a performance based inducement system (Conservation bonuses and credits) aimed at relieving pressure on biodiversity, upgrading livelihoods and increasing resilience. Our approach is consistent with IUCN and internationally agreed proposition of respect for traditional owners' rights and institutions, resolving extended standing exclusion, restored rights and cultural identity as well as empowered communities to keep up and participate in conservation efforts.

This work is partly presented at 7th International Conference on Biodiversity Conservation and Ecosystem Management July 26-27, 2018 Melbourne, Australia