The Lost trees and habitats of our Forest

Awareness and Green Livelihood Support for Regenerating the Lost Habitats of Mount Cameroon Forest

Abstract

Introduction/background

Studies indicated that there were lots of different types of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) and timber lying unexploited in the forest (Andel, 2006), but the last decades has witness massive exploitation of the forest for both timber and NTFPs. NTFPs has become a major source of house hold income in settlements around forest zones and the stands of timber trees in the remaining forest and farm lands is difficult to come by.

The presence of large multinational plantations and small holder cash crop plantations of cocoa, palm and others in Fako Division have led to massive loss of forest and the disappearance to most of these tree species. Exploiters and market dealers of NTFPs confirm that there is a noticeable shortage and disappearance of some forest species, which makes their exploitation even more as their demand keeps rising. A typical example is *Afrostylrax lepidophyllus* (Country onion) and *Gnetum africana* (Eru), which is now found only in distant forest areas far off from the reach of many local harvesters. In addition, the way of harvesting timber and NTFPs is very unsustainable and pose a big threat in the survival of these trees in the wild.

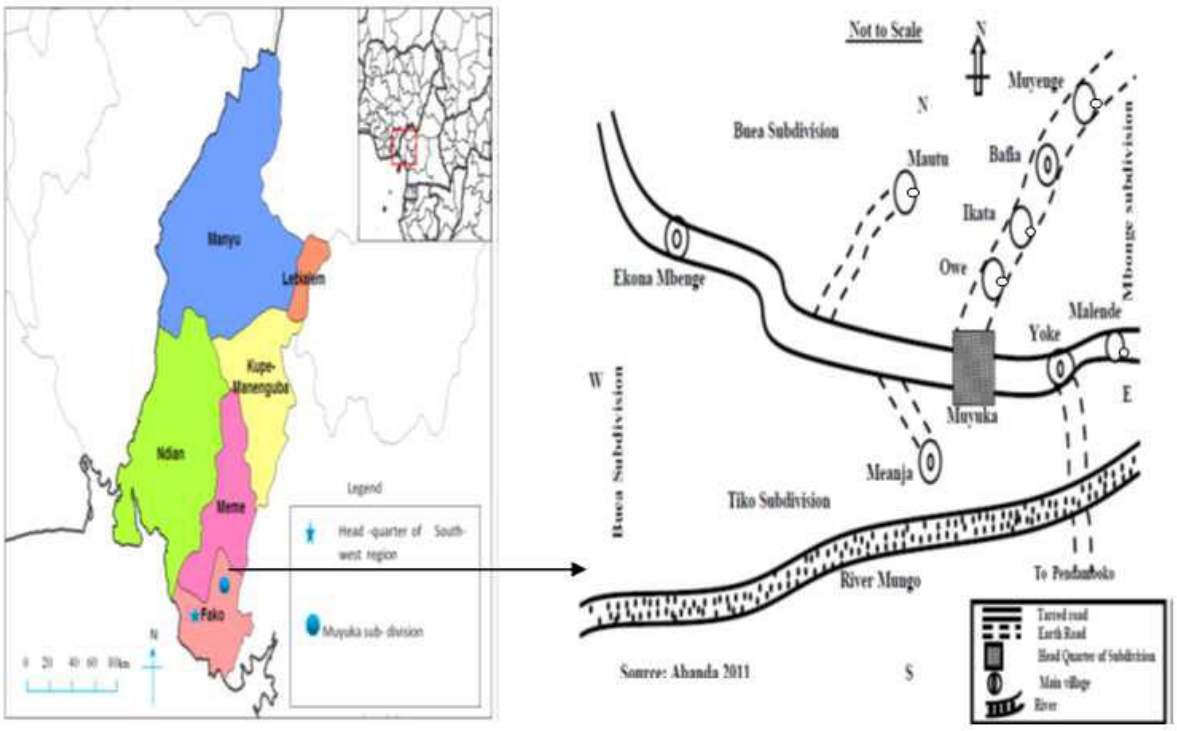
Local names of major forest trees like Bobinga and different products like forests fruits and oils and forest seeds are difficult to hear and seen within local communities. This is because their presence in local communities is not common and their identification in the forest and local farming systems are unknown. Because these trees have virtually disappeared in the forest, their importance is unheard and unknown to many. There is then need for awareness within local communities for identification, importance and regeneration.

Project Area

The project area is the Owe and Ikata villages of the Muyuka sub region. This sub region covers 18 villages in the South West Region (SWR) of Cameroon which lies along the slopes of the Mount Cameroon. The head quarter Muyuka is a small town located (4.72167°N and 9.64083°E) about 31km from Buea, the regional head quarter.

The region is situated along two protected areas; the Bakundu forest reserve that cuts across the region and the Mount Cameroon forest reserve that extends from Ekona Lelu to Muyenge. The Owe and the Ikata villages lies in the Mount Cameroon Forest Reserves (MCFR) and the loss of forest here to agriculture and rural expansion is high as it is a home to about more than 3000 people and a key producer of both food and cash crops supplying the area and beyond.

The main livelihood support activity in the area is agriculture where farmers are either involved in medium and large scale mono cropping of cash crops; and/or small scale food crop cultivation or both. These agricultural activities are carried out in environmentally unfriendly ways like slash and burn and shifting cultivation. At present no lumbering companies exploits the forests of this area because all the best timber have long gone. The regeneration of the remaining forest is only at the mercy of sustainable land use like re-aforestation, sustainable agroforestry and strict forest policies.



Justification/problem Statement

Non timber forest products (NTFPs) and timber are the back bone of our local forest systems and their diversity makes them vital in the forest ecosystem and biological diversity. They offer important environmental services and are major component of the food chain for both man and forest animals. In recent years the consumption and exploitation of NTFPs and related products is on the increase. This puts their regeneration under stress as some species are almost endemic. Market survey revealed that NTFPs like Eru (*Gnetum africanum*) is now very sparse in the forest region of Mount Cameroon and more than 80% of market supply in this region is from the forest regions of Littoral and Centre. Local names of timber trees like Bobinga, Sapele and Jato are unknown to youths and younger farmers.

The fact that the use of timber and NTFPs cuts through all sectors of life in both rural and urban centres adds more stress to the forest and their sustainability. Their uses cut through tradition, craft, wood fuel, medicine, construction, fashion and most important nutrition. Nutritionally, they provide all the basic classes of food. Their diverse use and increasing demand has made them become a major source of income for most rural and city dwellers and the fact that the forest is cut down at faster rate for agriculture, timber for export and other purposes, is also a major threat to the survival of most of these tree species and their related products and the forest in which they are harvested.

In this area, farming is the major activity for livelihood. With increasing population growth and poor farming techniques in this area, income and living standards are very low. In order to make up for livelihood support, other environmentally unfriendly activities like pouching and gathering or harvesting of other forest products like the Non timber forest products (NTFPs) tend to compete with the search for more lands to either extend existing farm lands or open up new estate for additional cultivation.

At present no lumbering companies exploits the forests of this area because they have already exploited all the best timber located here. For this reason, the recognition and importance for most of these tree species are unheard and unknown to many. The regeneration of the remaining forest is only at the mercy of sustainable land use like re-aforestation, sustainable agroforestry and strict forest policies. There is then need for awareness within local communities for identification, importance and regeneration. This will reduce forest exploitation and increase species conservation for some NTFP and timber species.

Goal

This project seek to integrate best adaptable NFTPs and timber into Local Farming Systems (LFS) in order to reduce the influx of man into the forest while increasing local income and farm diversity.

Objectives

- Increase local awareness on identification, diversity and importance of timber and NTFPs
- Build 150 farmers capacity from two villages (Owe and Ikata) on integrating NFTPs into Local Farming Systems (LFSs)
- Create a tree nursery and demonstration unit for a range of NFTPs and timber for the Mount Cameroon farming communities
- Provision of material support (seedlings) for farm integration. This will increase farmers' income and community welfare

Methodology

The life cycle of most Non Timber (NT) tree species from planting to maturity, takes longer time than cash crops to mature and starts flowering. For this reason the techniques of plant propagation by budding and grafting will be incorporated in order to reduce the age of plant species from planting to flowering. In order to have the best plants in terms of height and rooting system during planting, seeds are allow to germinate and grow for six months and more before distribution for transplanting.

Meeting with stakeholders like chiefs and quarter and tribal heads in order introduce project idea and for acceptance

Setting of an integrated nursery for NTFPs and timber in order to create a seed bank for distribution to local farmers

Sensitization via flyers, posters and hand bills and local announcement in order create awareness

Focus group meetings with farmers in two villages in order to establish project concepts and purpose

Training and workshops in order to educate farmers on vegetative plant propagation techniques

Expected Results

Increased awareness on the socioeconomic importance of NFTPs and timber

Creation of integrated tree nursery for NTFPs, timber, fruits and cash crop for farm integration and forest regeneration

Build capacity of 150 farmers from two villages (Owe and Ikata) on conserving NTFPs and timber for regeneration and farm integration

Availability of seedlings for some NTFPs and timber for local farmers

Reduce forest use and degeneration

Beneficiaries

The project will directly benefit 150 farmers and indirectly benefits more than 1000 local people including youth, women, local farmers and their family members.

Some of the local people lack enough land to carry out farming. Due to financial and social constraints, many of the youth and women have not had access to joining vocational institutions and have little means of generating income for their families. This project may pave way to solve these financial and social constraints in the long run, while solving environmental crises of cutting down trees in forest reserves. The NTFPs will also serve as a major source of nutrients and income to most community dwellers. These trees are major source of traditional medicine and serve as snacks and gifts in traditional ceremonies.

Environmental Impact

The planting and integration of NTFPs and timber in to LFS will go a long way to reduce forest exploitation and degeneration. These trees will increase forest biodiversity for both flora and fauna, because their fruits are food to many wild animals like bats. This will set a ground work forest regeneration and even conservation of environmental and cultural heritage. The trees will also increase stock of carbon sink, thus a way to mitigate climate change

Action Plan/ Time frame

Activities	Time frame					
	S- O	N-D	J- F	M-A	M- J	J- A
Meeting with all stakeholders	X					
Preparation of field equipment	X	X				
Printing of flyers, posters and information sheets		X				
Sensitisation and awareness		X	X	X		
Focus group meetings			X	X	X	
Preparation of nursery unit	X	X	X	X		
Preparation of polythene bags for nurseries		X	X	X		
Collection of seeds for nursing/planting	X	X	X	X	X	
Building of propagators			X			
Workshops and training sessions			X	X		
Distribution of seedlings to farmers				X	X	X
Monitoring and evaluation		X	X	X	X	X
Report writing		X	X	X	X	X
Key: S, D,J, F, M, A, M, J, J, A	Months of the year					

BUDGET

Item description	Unit	Quantity	Unit cost in (FCFA)	Total cost (FCFA)	Amt Requested in dollars ($)	Other funding/support in dollars ($)	
Meetings							
Awareness raising	4 rounds	4	25000	100000	0	181.8	By SACRCoD
Stakeholder meetings	Sessions	4	25000	100000	0	181.8	By SACRCoD
Focus group meetings	Sessions	2	100000	200000	100	263.6	By SACRCoD
Sub total Meetings				**400000**	**100**	**627.3**	
Nursery structure							
Land				500000	709.1	200.0	Local community and SACRCoD
Materials				900000	1436.4	200.0	Local community and SACRCoD
Seeds				850000	1295.5	250.0	Local community and SACRCoD
Labour force	Months	12	40000	480000	572.7	300.0	Local community and SACRCoD

Sub total Nursery Structure				**2730000**	**4013.6**	**950.0**	
Training and workshops							
2 Facilitators	Times	2	50000	200000	263.6	100.0	
Feeding	Session	160	2000	640000	863.6	300.0	Local community and SACRCoD
Sub total Trainings and Workshops				**840000**	**1127.2**	**400.1**	
Coordination/Management							
Staff cost (feeding of 2 field staff)	Months	12	25000	600000	890.9	200.0	By SACRCoD
Travel costs (To and from communities)				600000	1072.7	18.2	By SACRCoD
Office running cost		12	20000	240000	100	336.4	By SACRCoD
Equipment				600000	872.7	218.2	By SACRCoD
Sub total Coordination and Management				**2040000**	**2936.3**	**1136.4**	
Monitoring and reporting	12			**100000**	0	**181.8**	By SACRCoD
Sub Total				**6110000**	**8177.1**	**2932.0**	
Miscellaneous: 5% of TC				**305500**	**555.5**	**0**	
Grand Total				**6415500**	**8732.6**	**2932.0**	

Budget justification

Meetings *requesting 100 from 727.3*
Nursery structure *requesting 4013.6 from 4963.6*
Training and workshop *requesting 1127.2 from 1527.3*
Coordination and management *requesting 2936.3 from 3709.1*
Monitoring and reporting *requesting 0 from 181.8*
Miscellaneous *requesting 555.5*

Monitoring and evaluation

There will be a monitoring and evaluation plan for the project. This will include frequent visit by the project management team. Community labour will be hired for maintenance, watering and weeding of nursery. Community leadership will also be put in place for work supervision, control and reporting to project coordinator. There will be periodic reporting of project work and execution to funders, partners and major stakeholders. In addition, project shall be published on the organisation web page, and some related journals in order to sensitise a wider audience.

Justification/Sustainability

There is the need to regenerate the lost components of the forest and look for feasible means to conserve forest reserves while improving the livelihood of the local people. The nursery will be constructed and established in an integrated manner. Components of the nursery will include some major cash crops like cocoa, palm and rubber for sale on minimum price. This will ensure cash flow for project continuity. In addition, project coordinator shall seek funding from other funders and organise fund raising events in order to sustain, main and expand the project to other communities.

Project Team

Lekeanju N Tayoh: President/ CEO: of SACRCoD and Holder of M.Sc in Organic Food Chain Management, University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart and BSc in Environmental and Resource Management at the Brandenburg University of Technology, Cottbus, Germany. He is the main project coordinator and has over 10 years of experience in tree and food crop production. Has research and project expertise on sustainable agriculture, farm and crop diversification, integrated tree nursery development and rapid food crop seed multiplication. Have extensive knowledge on NTFPs and other forest resources and expertise on project proposal writing, project development, management, implementation, monitoring and evaluation within local communities

Apella Magellan Ipaven-taar: Holder of BSc in Sociology and Anthropology from the University of Buea, Cameroon. He is the community adviser and has expertise on project development, project management, monitoring and evaluation. Also has experience in natural resource management and social forestry. Has work extensively on strategic planning, patrol report writing, technical and financial report wiring, project proposal writing, communal development planning, advocacy and lobbying.

Tanyi Helen ESongnyor: BSc holder in Botany from the University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon and holder of HND in forestry from the National Forestry School in Balmayo, Cameroon. She is the nursery coordinator and has expertise in Forest inventory, Systematic botany, Community forest management, forest exploitation, Sylviculture (nursery, reforestation), Vegetative propagation of both forest and agroforestry trees, domestication of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP) and some wildlife species. Has work extensively on nursery development and plant propagation of timber and NTFPs for farm integration and reaforestation. This team will add with hired and local labour in order to manage and coordinate the project.

Project Management

The project will be managed by the Project Coordinator, who will work hand in hand with the project committee comprising of a community adviser, a nursery coordinator, local project leaders and gardeners and technical support officers (Foresters), who will ensure timely and quality project implementation and accountability.

The implementing committee will comprise of the Project Coordinator, the community adviser and the project nursery coordinator. They will hire and supervise the employers on nursing, overall stocking and management of the project.

The Project Coordinator is the accounting officer, who will keep all the records of transactions, with evidence of genuine receipts, bank statements of all the transactions. He together with his team will submit progressive and completion reports with full accountability to donors and stakeholders authority who will be concerned about the project.

The regional forest and environment offices will provide the needed technical support and supervision during the implementation stage.

The monitoring and evaluation will be carried out by the Project Committee and Coordinator who will be answerable to the donors.