EQUATOR INITIATIVE

UNDP

TROPICAL FOREST AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Republic of Cameroon

Equator Prize Winner

Equator Initiative Case Studies

Local sustainable development solutions for people, nature, and resilient communities

UNDP EQUATOR INITIATIVE CASE STUDY SERIES

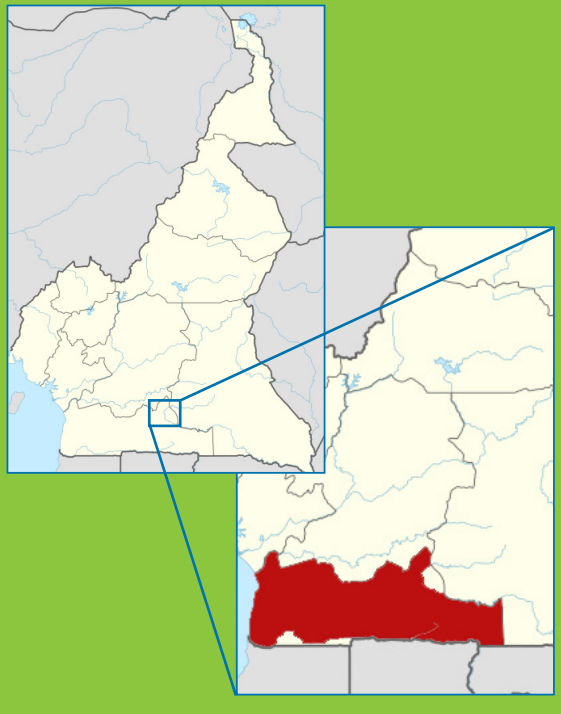
Local and Indigenous communities across the world are advancing innovative sustainable development solutions that work for people and for nature. Few publications or case studies tell the full story of how such initiatives evolve, the breadth of their impacts, or how they change over time. Fewer still have undertaken to tell these stories with community practitioners themselves guiding the narrative. The Equator Initiative aims to fill that gap.

The **UNDP Equator Initiative**, supported by generous funding from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), awarded the Equator Prize in 2021 to 10 outstanding Indigenous and local communities from 9 countries. The winning organizations showcase innovative, nature-based solutions for tackling biodiversity loss and climate change. Selected from a pool of over 600 nominations from 126 countries, the winners were celebrated at a high-profile event, held virtually, on October 4th, in the lead up to climate change and biodiversity negotiations at COP26 and COP15. The event was part of the **Nature for Life Hub**, a three-day series of virtual events designed to raise ambition for nature-based solutions in global biodiversity and climate policy. The winners are sustainably protecting, restoring, and managing forests, farms, wetlands, marine ecosystems, and biodiversity to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, help communities adapt to climate change, and create a green new economy.

The following case study is one in a growing series that describes vetted and peer-reviewed best practices intended to inspire the policy dialogue needed to scale nature-based solutions essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

PROJECT SUMMARY

Operating around the Dja Biosphere Reserve around the Campo Ma'an National Park and the Manyange-na-elombo Marine Park in the south of Cameroon, Tropical Forest and Rural Development (TF-RD) is empowering Indigenous communities through cacao-based agroforestry value chains and the collection of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and other fruits. The group has planted over 70,000 trees for production and provides training in collection quality standards to obtain higher prices for food and cosmetic products. Agreements between Indigenous women collectors and government agencies secure access and use rights in the Reserve. The model's viability is proven through avoiding deforestation and a reduction in poaching in the communities. The initiative focuses on the economic inclusion of several Indigenous groups, some of them pursuing traditional semi-nomadic lifestyles, through access to education, the registration of community businesses, and jobs for 500 women collectors of NTFPs and 300 cacao producers. TF-RD maintains partnerships with several food and cosmetics wholesalers.



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KEY FACTS

Equator Prize winner

2021

Founded

2010

Location

Peripheries of the Dja Faunal Reserve, Campo Ma'an National Park and Manyange-na-elombo Marine Park, Republic of Cameroon

Beneficiaries

2,266 direct beneficiaries, including 600 women and 1,416 children; 80,000 indirect beneficiaries

Thematic areas

Forest conservation/sustainable development; Sustainable livelihoods; Biodiversity conservation

Fields of work

Protected area management; Carbon credit scheme; Policy, regulatory or legal advocacy

Sustainable Development Goals addressed

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

EQUATOR PRIZE 2021 WINNER FILM

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

> ***We started with a small meeting, we made the tontine. TF-RD arrived and suggested that we value NTFPs. TF-RD trained us on how to structure our group and today we apply the advice to sell our products. Before, we used to sell our products at a lower, now we sell our products at a good price. We are very advantageous, we have our store for the storage of the collected products and the buyer found by TF-RD comes to take the products. TF-RD gave us materials: the boots, the tarpaulins and the bags. We collect Djansang, Mbalaka, Wild Mango and Moabi. After the group sales, we take 2000 FCFA from the money of each member for the functioning of the group. We have two funds: the school fund and the annual fund. The school fund is broken in September to send the children to school. The annual fund is used to make loans with interest to members and non-members. At the end of December, the interest is shared according to the percentage of money of each member, and the rest is used to pay the office and to organize a small party. We are planning to build the health center and the home. We want to build our houses, as well as the schools for our children.***
>
> — Ndobou Aurianne, Vice President, Trust of Malen 2

Tropical Forest and Rural Development (TF-RD) supports communities and ecosystems along delicate borders of natural protected areas spanning both landscapes and seascapes in the Republic of Cameroon (Cameroon). On land, the organization's work focuses on community partnerships near Dja Biosphere Reserve, a protected area and a World Heritage Site recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). TF-RD also works in close proximity to Campo Ma'an National Park, a biodiverse evergreen rainforest designated as an official Important Bird Area (IBA). In the marine environment, the organization's work focuses on Manyange na Elombo National Marine Park, Cameroon's only Marine Protected Area (MPA). Dja Faunal Reserve and Campo Ma'an National Park are vital habitats for globally threatened land species like the western lowland gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*) and African forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*), identified as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, as well as the chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*) and giant pangolin (*Smutsia gigantea*), identified as endangered by IUCN. Dja Faunal Reserve and Campo Ma'an National Park protect more than 300 species of birds and important and threatened plants, including the great Moabi tree (*Baillonell toxisperma*). In the marine environment, Manyange na Elombo protects habitat for species, including marine turtles like the endangered green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and critically endangered hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and their nesting beaches, as well as the critically endangered humpback dolphin (*Sousa teuszii*).

Cameroon's protected areas are also home to many human communities, including several Indigenous communities that historically maintained a harmonious relationship within their natural landscape. Dja Biosphere Reserve, for example, is home to approximately 4,000 people inside the official reserve and about 40,000 who live in surrounding areas. Cameroon is home to 240 diverse ethnic communities, many of which are linguistically connected into larger Bantu or Semi-Bantu linguistic groups. Communities around Dja Biosphere Reserve are comprised of multiple ethnic groups, including the Badjoué, Boulou, Fan, Nzimé, and two semi-nomadic hunter-gatherer Indigenous communities, the Kaka and Baka. Baka people live traditionally within the reserve and are permitted to hunt freely on their lands despite the designation of the protected area. With a 40,000-year history of harmonious livelihoods within Cameroon's tropical forests, threats to these forests are also threats to the Baka way of life.

The forests of Dja and the oceans in and surrounding Campo Ma'an and Mayange na Elombo are vital to preserving traditional ways of life, rich biodiverse wild foods, medicinal plants, clean water stores, carbon storage, and other plant and animal resources critical to human life. However, pressures from the logging and agricultural industry, as well as a lack of alternative livelihoods for growing nearby human settlements, are threatening the harmony between humans and forests. These pressures have degraded natural resources and endangered a range of species.

Origin and structure

In 2010, eight villages (Malen 5, Mimpala, Doumo Pierre, Kabilone II, Nemeyong, Bintsina, Ngouleminanga, and Malen II/Bitsil) along the periphery of the Dja Faunal Reserve organized to implement a rural development model designed to reverse threats to protected areas and their borders. The villages' model sought to benefit local communities and safeguard nature simultaneously. Leaders developed a mission to alleviate poverty through forest-friendly economic activities along the periphery of protected areas, inherently safeguarding vital habitats for threatened species.

TF-RD's model accomplishes its mission through environmental education and training on sustainable natural resource use for target groups and partners. Through collaboration with communities, the model also focuses on alternative livelihoods, moving communities away from poaching, logging, large-scale cattle farming, and other activities linked to deforestation. TF-RD promotes agroforestry, sustainable non-timber forest products (NTFPs), and value-added consumer products. The non-governmental organization (NGO) has a staff of 14 and a volunteer board of directors that guides its broad strategic vision. TF-RD ensures widespread community involvement through the participation of 30 community representatives, who participate in all meetings and take what they learn back to their communities, no matter how remote or rural.

For 10 years, TF-RD has worked with communities around protected areas, honing and validating its vision to create a socio-economic reality that supports both the economic empowerment of local communities and the conservation of nature. The organization has shown that community involvement, participation, and empowerment can cultivate a collective conscience for the environment.

"When the trainers come, we always want the training to take place in my field so that my brothers see and are motivated. My field is a school field, it gives new ideas, it motivates others. It is our partner TF-RD who trains us and gives us the techniques. I hope that this will continue and that future generations will also benefit from it."

Samuel Bambo Mempong, Bifolone

LOCAL CHALLENGES

Deforestation and forest degradation

Deforestation in Cameroon has predominantly occurred due to the exploitation of forest products and the expansion of agriculture. As these operations enter perimeter forests from various directions, forest corridors and buffers around reserves become fragmented, a precursor to large-scale forest loss. Private extraction companies set up operations in perimeter forests under concessions granted by the government called Forest Management Units (FMUs). In Dja Faunal Reserve, this development occurs on nearly all its peripheries.

In 2008, the Sud Cameroun Hévéa company obtained permits for rubber tree cultivation in two FMUs of 36,000 and 8,000 hectares. Both areas are located near Dja Biosphere Reserve, with the larger area a mere 200 metres from the Reserve. The permits attracted more than 30,000 new inhabitants to the operation site and surroundings. These drastic population changes have contributed to deforestation and wildlife poaching, as newly arrived inhabitants have cultivated food, harvested forest products, and hunted to provide for their families in these remote rural areas.

Other industrial projects also pose threats to protected areas and forest communities. The Mékin hydroelectric dam, for example, was constructed on the Dja River along the perimeter of the Dja Biosphere Reserve. Construction was completed in 2018 despite an impact assessment raising several concerns, including modification of landscape, destruction of vegetation cover, loss of wildlife habitat, fragmentation of ecosystems, proliferation of invasive aquatic plants, disruption of fish and fauna species, and risk of bird collisions with cables and pylons. Since its creation, the dam has caused 4,000 hectares to flood, forcing eight villages on the registered borderline of the Dja Faunal Reserve to relocate their farmlands.

Despite arguments for job creation and economic growth, profits from exploitative activities like logging operations have rarely reached local communities. On the contrary these operations have led to negative impacts like forest degradation, the disappearance of wildlife species, and forced relocation of communities. Agriculture and industrial operations can also cause chemical leaching into important waterways within reserves and border communities. Despite negative impacts, extractive and exploitative activity has notably increased from year to year.

Biodiversity loss

Rare and prized trees, including Wenge (*Millettia laurentii*), Doussie (*Afzelia pachyloba*), Bilinga (*Nauclea gilletii*), East African Mahogany (*Khaya anthotheca*), and Moabi (*Baillonella toxisperma*), are highly sought after for their high value as wood, oil, and medicines. However, these trees are threatened as they represent less than 1 percent of the forest and have no legal protection. TF-RD members are particularly concerned about the Moabi, a species recognized as vulnerable by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). While the benefits of high-value trees and forest resources drive extraction locally, local culture and history recognize their importance in natural ecosystems, supporting efforts to conserve these species for the future. Many Indigenous communities in Cameroon, for example, consider Moabi traditional medicine to be sacred.

Poaching networks for local and international trade of wildlife species also threaten wildlife and the sustainable management of biodiversity. Local community members can quickly become entangled in poaching network operations often encouraged and facilitated by the construction of logging roads and logging transport vehicles. Several species targeted by the trade are listed on the International Union

for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. These include the critically endangered western gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*), African forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*), and hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*). Other species at risk identified by the IUCN Red List include the endangered chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*), giant ground pangolin (*Smutsia gigantea*), and green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) as well as the vulnerable golden-bellied crowned monkey (*Cercopithecus pogonias ssp. Pogonias*), and loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*).

The most pressing threat to Cameroon's vulnerable and diverse wildlife is habitat loss. Driven by industrial logging, agriculture, mining, and human population pressures, wild spaces are shrinking in Cameroon, as they are worldwide, leading to an unprecedented era of rapid biodiversity loss.

Operations challenges

Harvesting non-timber forest products (NTFPs) is a challenging task, especially when done with a high bar for sustainability practices. Some NTFPs have irregular or seasonal production cycles, leading to scarcity of products in some seasons and inconsistent supply. NTFPs and agroforestry products grown sustainably are typically conducted on a small scale considering the natural ecosystem. The intentional sharing of space with wildlife and natural habitats creates a challenge for competing with large-scale operations. Likewise, NTFPs are less well known in the marketplace, requiring more effort to raise awareness of their benefits and increase demand.

Smallholder farmers and forest harvesters need better access to resources that address the significant challenges to their remote working locations. Carrying heavy harvests from the forest to the closest village and transporting products to sale areas can prevent many farmers from going to markets and growing their businesses. Remote locations can also create hardships for farmers and harvesters to attend group training. Improving efficiency and creating scale within these local operations would require strategic equipment, such as four-wheel drive vehicles, local storage facilities, and processing equipment. It would also require community organizing to arrange and manage systems for small farmers to work together to combine harvests and attract larger prominent buyers.

Collaboration with government ministries on instituting frameworks and policies for the sustainable use of forests along protected areas has also been a challenge for TF-RD. The main issue is the changing political will as new political parties take office. Some ministers come into office with different interests in the use of forests.

Erosion

Coastal erosion on the periphery of the Manyange na Elombo National Marine Park, particularly in the village of Ebodjé, is also a major concern. This area is experiencing an alarming rate of erosion as many villagers complain of the negative effects caused by rising sea levels. Some of the main causes of sea level rise in this area are deforestation, agriculture along the coastline, and industrialization. Due to these effects, the coastline of this area is characterized by fallen trees with roots, twisted trees, water very close to the houses, etc. The villagers complain that some houses have been washed away by this rise in sea level, children have died, and others have experienced flooding in their homes during high tides.

LOCAL RESPONSES

Building a local model

Tropical Forest and Rural Development (TF-RD) takes a multi-dimensional approach to sustainable development and conservation. The organization has built an innovative model that assists communities along the peripheries of protected areas to conserve their lands, improve local perceptions about wildlife, and prosper from green enterprise. TF-RD's model focuses on the adoption of income-generating activities that avoid deforestation, including agroforestry, sustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), and production of local natural products. Key to its success, TF-RD supports communities by establishing wide-reaching market connections, creating local green enterprise network groups, and offering ongoing training in quality and compliance with national and international standards. The model also includes training and resources for community monitoring and surveillance committees, empowering local stewardship and protection of natural resources and wildlife. Education, training, and organizing are effectively carried out by 30 community representatives who liaise between their own communities and TF-RD, ensuring community decision-making, feedback loops, and communication channels.

KEY IMPACTS

Building a local model

- More than 500 people in 23 villages near Dja are engaged in conservation activities.
- More than 150 people in 10 villages near Campo Ma'an National Park are engaged in conservation activities.
- Representatives have been appointed in 30 communities to provide coordination between villages and TF-RD.
- Monitoring and surveillance committees have been established in 17 villages.

Sustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products

Harvesting non-timber forest products (NTFPs) allows communities to engage in profitable economic activities that minimize deforestation and degradation linked to tilled crops, cattle grazing for beef, mining, and logging. To build the NTFP sector, TF-RD organizes Common Initiative Groups (CIGs). These groups allow community members to assemble based on their interests and sectors, establishing continual networks for learning and growth. CIGs host training in best practices for harvesting high-quality, premium products.

TF-RD also provides critical support in establishing NTFP value chains. Through its private partner Tropical Forest Food and Cosmetics (TF-FC), TF-RD markets products, researches buyers, and offers expertise on national and international standards. TF-RD staff and their local liaisons share their

value-chain research and knowledge so community operations can reach the highest quality standards yielding premium prices. For example, TF-RD canvassed potential buyers for moabi oil-based products in Europe and the United States. The organization also provided training for community members on nursery techniques, quality assurance, and international compliance standards. Through work in value-chain development, TF-RD and community partners have established markets for products created from native trees: African oil bean (*Pentaclethra macropylla*) locally known as *mbalaka*, Njangsang (*Ricinodendron heudelotii*), wild Mango (*Irgvingia gabonensis*), and Moabi (*Baillonella toxisperma*).

TF-RD and CIGs also collaborate to internalize value-added processes that typically occur outside source areas. Value-added processing allows communities to earn higher percentages of product profits, concentrating more value at the source. For example, within the framework of the BIONAT project (organic and natural products from Cameroon) implemented by TF-RD, earnings are being reinvested by community members, resulting in village savings and loan associations, savings funds for upcoming projects, advances in children's schooling, and the opening of small businesses in the neighbourhood.

KEY IMPACTS

Sustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products

- Five native NTFP value chains have been established.
- NFTPs generate incomes for 600 women and 250 men.

Agroforestry and recovery of fallow lands

TF-RD promotes the cultivation of agroforestry farms based on cacao, coconut, and rubber trees enriched with plantains and other local crop trees, including citrus and fruit varieties. Plantings are particularly encouraged on fallow lands formerly farmed and abandoned. On these lands, agroforestry operations become a strategic environmental restoration activity, regenerating degraded soil, getting more trees back into the ground, and avoiding deforestation of intact forest areas. TF-RD estimates that its community agroforestry systems contribute to avoiding deforestation across more than 181 hectares, making it a critical strategy for sequestering carbon and mitigating climate change.

Agroforestry operations have also proven to be powerful livelihood opportunities, especially critical for hunters and bushmeat traders caught in wildlife trading networks. To guide former hunters and wildlife traders, TF-RD establishes Reciprocal Environmental Agreements (REAs), which provide parameters to assist in environmental conservation, while offering assistance and resources for transitioning to agroforestry. Likewise, in the coastal community of Ebodje, women's groups have partnered with TF-RD to build a thriving coconut sector, allowing women to lead coconut agroforestry as an alternative to hunting endangered sea turtles.

Agroforestry farmers are forming cooperatives to increase their harvest numbers and leverage larger buyers. With the support of TF-RD, these cooperatives have also launched catfish and carp farming initiatives, adding additional layers of income security, climate resilience, and food security for community members. Cooperatives find support in their agroforestry efforts from TF-RD training and development sessions, including training on the cultivation and harvest guidelines of the Rainforest Alliance Certification. Continued training is helping agroforestry cooperatives move toward the exciting goal of achieving organic certification.

KEY IMPACTS

Agroforestry and recovery of fallow lands

- Approximately 5 tonnes of certified cacao per year are sold to food and cosmetics wholesalers.
- Deforestation has been avoided on more than 181 hectares.
- REAs have been established in 35 villages on the northern periphery of the Dja Reserve.

Land rights and mapping for Indigenous and local communities

TF-RD's model supports communities in securing territorial rights and rights of access to natural resources as the keystone to empowering community environmental action. Paired with TF-RD's environmental education and community wildlife monitoring, the model has resulted in vital local protection for endangered species, including great apes and African elephants. For example, TF-RD has helped communities along the borders of Dja Biosphere Reserve and Campo Ma'an National Park adopt ecological monitoring and community surveillance practices, aiming to increase the protection of their vital and threatened natural resources. Communities implement practices such as wildlife inventories, participatory data collection, wildlife camera trap monitoring, and the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART tool), a globally adopted methodology for managing and protecting nature. Within marine areas, TF-RD has helped improve perceptions toward marine turtle conservation and establish a coconut sector as an alternative income to turtle fishing.

TF-RD supports establishing land rights for communities that have a historical connection to the lands they live on but no legal land tenure documentation. For example, along the border of the Dja Biosphere Reserve, land has been secured for the Baka people. In this case, TF-RD helped facilitate dialogue and exchange between Bantu and Baka community members, and local representatives and authorities, including the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER). In 2021, Bantu leaders ultimately recognized the land rights of the Baka people and agreed to transfer rights. As a result, all stakeholders are now working together to prepare a map delineating the area belonging to the Baka people of Bifolone. In excitement for the land ownership, the Bifolone community is also preparing a flora and fauna inventory for ecological monitoring, with a focus on the monitoring of great ape and elephant populations.

TF-RD also supports rights of access to resources in Forest Management Units (FMUs), areas where logging or other extractive activities are carried out under concessions to private operators. For example, TF-RD helped solidify an agreement with the SOFOHNY logging company and the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF). Several meetings and consultations were held with MINFOF, representatives of the forestry company, women's groups, and other representing groups from local communities, resulting in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) authorizing community collection of NTFPs on two FMUs near the border of Dja Biosphere Reserve. While FMUs are historically only granted to private companies, this victory set a precedent for including local stakeholders and community groups.

Community rights to natural resources can improve forest conservation and endangered species protection, as local community members are vested in maintaining local air quality, clean water, healthy soil for growing food, and flourishing forests for harvesting NTFPs. Tools like REAs, technical training seminars, and awareness-building workshops help community members maintain this locally vested interest.

KEY IMPACTS

Land rights and mapping for Indigenous and local communities

- Land rights have been secured on 665 hectares.
- About 150 members of the Baka Indigenous community of Bifolone have gained land rights.
- Community access has been granted across 66,000 hectares in one Forest Management Unit (FMU).

Promoting equality for women

TF-RD prioritises women's equitable access to programme benefits, land rights, and income generation. In particular, women's groups have benefited significantly from value-added product pipelines. TF-RD assists women's groups in establishing partnerships with private sector companies that specialise in selling and marketing women-made products. They also support women with training in NTFP harvesting, processing, value addition, and sales. TF-RD women's groups now produce and sell an array of products, including virgin oils, butters, soaps, and moabi oil-based cosmetics.

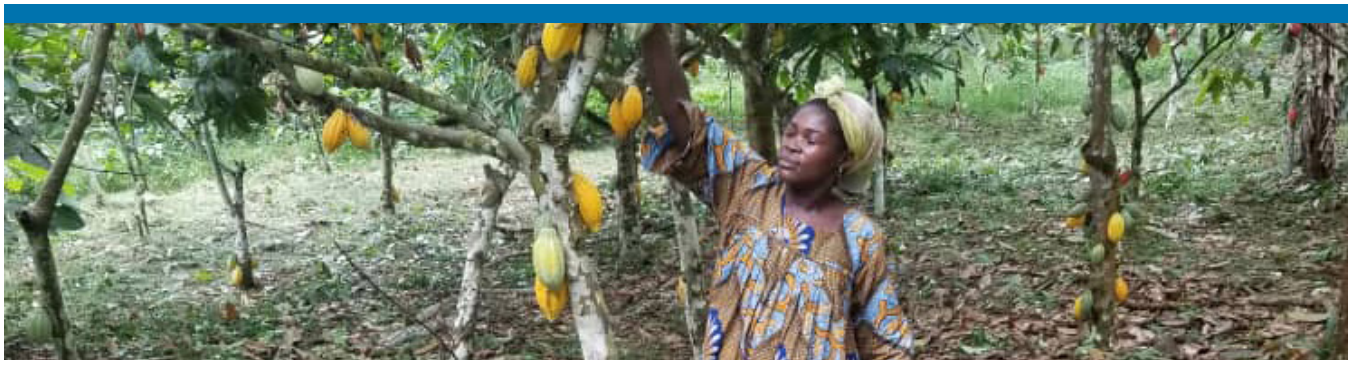
In the Baka community of Bifolone, women were integral in transferring land rights to Baka residents from Bantu owners. This transfer aided Baka women in benefiting from the development of moabi, wild mango, njangsan, and mbalaka value chains. TF-RD also works with the Bifolone community on training to increase competitiveness in the market. The transfer of land rights and development of NTFP value chains, production, harvest, and sales provided new resilience for women in maintaining the health and management of their households during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On the Dja Faunal Reserve periphery, women's groups were vital in establishing resource-sharing agreements with logging companies. Several meetings and consultations were held with critical stakeholders, including the Ministry of Forests and Fauna (MINFOF), representatives of the forestry company, women's groups, and other community groups. The meetings and discussions resulted in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) authorizing community collection of NTFPs on one logging concession, or Forest Management Unit (FMU).

KEY IMPACTS

Promoting equality for women

- TF-RD has supported 36 women's groups to be formed.
- Women's group branded products include household soaps in liquid and in pieces, toilet soap, hair oil, massage balm.
- Approximately 600 women have participated.



National policy impacts

Tropical Forest Rural Development's (TF-RD's) community advocacy work is influencing policy at the local level with national policy impacts. Much of this impact results from TF-RD's facilitation of complex relationships between local community groups, government ministries, and corporate entities for the right of access to natural resources and lands. For example, TF-RD facilitated a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between communities and corporations for fair rights of access to tracts of land. Historically, Forest Management Units (FMUs) have only been granted to corporations for timber extraction without the inclusion or consideration of local community needs. However, the negotiation led by TF-RD involved the Cameroon Ministry of Forests and Wildlife and other local and regional leaders to set a new precedent for land access. The resulting MOU provides a new model for the future access of communities to FMUs and the adoption of policies that consider and prioritise communities.

In addition, TF-RD introduced Reciprocal Environmental Agreements (REAs) in 25 communities along the peripheries of established protected areas. Such agreements support alternative livelihoods to poaching and harmful agricultural practices. Adopting REA policies in local communities has set another important precedent for supporting and involving communities in conservation. Lastly, TF-RD is facilitating the transfer of land rights to the local Indigenous Bakas community, showing potential for increasing recognition of historic land rights of Indigenous communities at local, regional, and national scale.

Through local policy changes, communities have become prominent advocates for protecting natural resources, with potential to influence policy at the national level. Memberships in networks like the Great Apes Management Alliance in Central Asia have assisted in showcasing these success stories at the national level and beyond.

Contributions to the global agenda

At the global level, TF-RD initiatives contribute to global goals and multilateral agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda). For example, the work of TF-RD contributes to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda. TF-RD's work on agroforestry, sustainable harvesting, and sustainable consumer-product businesses supports the goals of decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), sustainable communities (SDG 11), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), and climate action (SDG 13). Implementing community conservation actions, such as wildlife monitoring, contributes to the goal of life on land (SDG 15), which aims to protect, restore, and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss.

Through their support of women's groups and women-owned businesses TF-RD contributes to the achievement of the goal on gender equality (SDG 5).

TF-RD and partner communities also contribute to the vitally important protection of endangered and threatened species. This work supports the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and protects many species on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. The TF-RD model supports local environmental monitoring and stewardship of natural resources, resulting in protecting forests--vital carbon stores. Tools like the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART tool), a community methodology for monitoring nature, and Reciprocal Environmental Agreements (REAs), which mitigate the destruction of forests and oceans, help protect the climate by upholding

carbon storage in healthy forests and oceans. These actions are building communities that will continually contribute to Cameroon's Nationally Determined Contribution to the UNFCCC and the goal of mitigating climate change worldwide.

"I started making the soap in 2015. Before I used to take the raw material in detail, now I take in bags. I want to open a production workshop and a store here in my village because people are in need. After the training given by TF-RD, they gave me support in raw material and tools. Now, when I sell, I keep the profit to solve the problems of my family, when the child is sick, I take him to the hospital, I send my children to school. I continue to invest the capital and I buy the raw material myself."

Oléa Rose, Malen 5

REPLICATION, SCALABILITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

Replication

In 2010, TF-RD began working with eight villages on the northern periphery of the Dja Faunal Reserve. The innovative approach gained momentum and was gradually replicated in the peripheral areas of other protected areas. In 2018, the model was launched in the Boucle du Dja and the Campo Ma'an National Park with the Bagyelis Indigenous communities and the Ebodjé local community. Through the replication of TF-RD's model, this work has expanded from eight original villages to 33 villages, including 500 people in 20 villages around Dja and 150 people in 10 villages on the periphery of Campo Ma'an National Park.

To support replication in other areas, TF-RD also organizes exchange trips with organizations interested in the approach. TF-RD posts activity reports and newsletters on social networks and collaborates on scientific publications, allowing its crucial conservation actions to gain more exposure.

Scalability

TF-RD initiatives hold great potential for scaling up more broadly. Many TF-RD ideas and actions have already garnered local and national policy support. For example, TF-RD's work to implement Reciprocal Environmental Agreements (REAs) with community members to promote mutual economic and environmental benefits and establish Memorandums of Understanding MOUs with extractive companies for fair community access to Forest Management Units (FMUs) involves support from local and national leaders, including the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife. Importantly, TF-RD's model for change includes concerted efforts to build and restructure the broader consumer marketplace around non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and natural products. As market demand for sustainably harvested goods and local products increases, the model has the potential to scale more broadly.

TF-RD also formed network affiliation opportunities, enabling community members to assemble nationally and regionally based on their interests. Networks are places where members share experiences and support mutual development. For example, a popular network is the Great Apes Management Alliance in Central Africa. These networks are vital incubators for scaling and amplifying TF-RD solutions.

Sustainability

TF-RD puts community members in an empowered position of ownership and control that is more likely to lead to long-term success. The strategy relies on education, training, and establishing community rights of access to land and natural resources. The high adoption rates of community agroforestry operations and eco-businesses demonstrate the success of the model. With increased job opportunities and profits, an upward cycle of reinvestment into the community has begun. TF-RD members are launching new businesses, investing in children's education, and improving homes and community infrastructure. Financially, TF-RD has the support of government and non-government partners to implement special projects that support mutual goals in ecosystem restoration and community development.

FUTURE PLANS

In support of its sustainable harvesting work, TF-RD plans to install a solar dryer with a capacity to dry 300 kilograms of products like cacao for making chocolate. The dryer will belong to 500 women involved in the processing and finishing of natural products. TF-RD will assist by hosting informational and brainstorming meetings with the women involved. These meetings will help establish the location site for the dryer and best practices and protocols for the equitable use of the dryer. TF-RD will assist in purchasing and installing the equipment, as well as helping community members learn from experts. Group members will continue to meet with TF-RD to debrief the management of the dryer and engage in continued professional development. The collaboration will also employ a monitoring and evaluation system to track the benefits and perceived value of the technology for local households.

TF-RD also plans to support community members with new eco-tourism initiatives. Their sustainable tourism development plan has been finalized and will be implemented in the coming years. Their future developments will continue to strengthen market opportunities for community NTFPs, accomplishing their mission to alleviate poverty and protect ecosystems in and around protected forests in Cameroon.

PARTNERS

- ***Hévéa du Cameroun SARL:*** Provides training and technical capacity building on nursery production methods and sustainable rubber plantations.
- ***Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER):*** Supports solutions to issues in rural agriculture.
- ***Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDEP):*** responsible for the development and implementation of government policy on the environment and nature protection from a sustainable development perspective.
- ***Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF):*** Supports forestry and wildlife interventions as the supervisory body.
- ***Société Forestière du Haut Nyon (SOFHONY):*** Collaborates with women's groups to improve access to the resources of the Unité Forestière d'Aménagement.
- ***Tropical Forest Food and Cosmetics (TF-FC):*** Provides training and technical capacity building on NTFP primary processing protocols and buys NTFPS like cocoa produced by TF-RD.
- ***Well Grounded:*** Assists with capacity-building in organizational development and leadership.

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"Regarding cacao farming, we work with producers in the area, where we have been able to identify more than 70 producers all united in a cooperative where we provide trainings following the principles of Rainforest Alliance with the objective of producing high quality cacao. For the last three years, we have been supporting them through capacity building, awareness raising and also practicing agroforestry."

Tsafack Romaric, TF-RD Senior Technical Advisor

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