

## WWF FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT

<b>Project/Sub-Project Number</b>	AY 03 / CARPE II / CAR USAID Agreement AOT-A-00-00-00237-00
<b>Sub-Project Title</b>	Dzanga – Sangha

### INTRODUCTION

#### **The Dzanga-Sangha Project**

In 1990, the Dzang-Ndoki National Park (1,220 km<sup>2</sup> consisting of the Ndoki and Dzanga sectors) and a 3,159 km<sup>2</sup> area, the Dzanga-Sangha Dense Forest Special Reserve (DSDFSR), were gazetted. This was the first major accomplishment of the Dzanga-Sangha Project, which was started after signature of a cooperative agreement in 1988 between WWF and the Government of the Central African Republic (CAR).

#### The Sangha Trinational (STN) Initiative

The Dzanga – Sangha Project is an active partner in the transboundary Sangha Tri – National (STN) initiative comprising the contiguous forests and national parks of Cameroon (Lobeke National Park), Congo – Brazzaville (Nouabale – N'Doki National Park – NNNP) and CAR (Dzanga – N'Doki National Park). These STN members have made a commitment to protect a vast area of forest, the heart of which lies at the meeting point of the Congo-CAR-Cameroon boundaries. The STN is a focal point of the Yaounde Declaration receiving great support within the sub – region as well as internationally with the implication of WWF, WCS, GTZ, the World Bank, CAWHFI (Central African World Heritage Fund Initiative) and CBFP (Congo Basin Forest Partnership). A cooperative agreement to establish a tri-national park was signed between the three Governments.

#### Prior DPS Funding

Beside CARPE II support, major funding and technical assistance for the DSP has come from WWF (Netherlands, Germany, USA, International), German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), USAID (through CARPE), the World Bank, the CAR government and numerous private donors.

### **1. Significant changes to objectives or context**

During 2003, several key Project positions were either vacant (Technical Advisor for the Conservation Department, Head of Ecotourism Department), or, recently occupied with little or no transfer of duties due to the unfortunate death of the positions' predecessor (National Director). In addition, the WWF National Coordinator in Bangui passed away in April 2003 and the national Project manager in Bayanga was fired as a result of financial mismanagement.

Furthermore, the WWF Principal Technical Adviser unexpectedly needed to leave the country due to health problems in July 2003. From this moment on, there were no WWF or GTZ advisors consistently in place to consult the project, resulting in a negative impact on surveillance and general management performance of the reserve and park administration. CARPO assistance allowed accounting, the production of reports and budgets for FY 2004 as well as some technical support in order to secure a minimum conservation program during this difficult period. Due to the

delay in submitting project proposals and reports during that time, cash flow problems occurred. With the absence of the technical advisers project implementation and efficiency were seriously reduced.

Since February 2003 the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) withdrew its Technical Advisors to Yaoundé because of the political situation in CAR. Since 1994 GTZ is a fundamental partner in managing the Dzanga-Sangha Project (DSP), together with the Ministry of Water and Forests and WWF. Although WWF technical and financial support is aimed more at conservation activities, while GTZ concentrated on rural and community development actions, much overlap existed. The drastic reduction of activities from the Rural Development Department has had a widespread negative impact on the Project.

In March 2003, political turmoil in the C.A.R. capitol, Bangui, led to a change of governments. Political instability has followed. The above events undoubtedly reduced the overall Project leadership capacity and its subsequent ability to implement the intended goals of the DSP.

This led to confusion related to the status of this grant and its reporting requirements.

Subsequently WWF-US requested a no cost extension to be able to address remaining issues related to this grant and to finalize both the technical and financial reports.

Most of the activities reported here in reality reflect the period from January until September 2003, when most of the remaining funds were spend and the activities under this grant were implemented. However these activities did continue under other funding including a new CARPE grant.

## 2. Progress towards objectives / sub-objectives

Objective 1: The system of surveillance is expanded and improved

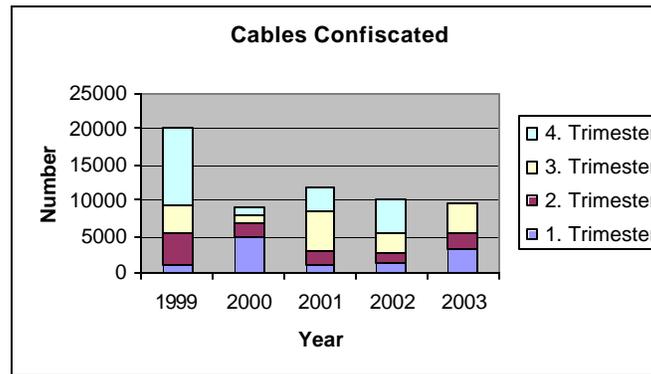
The permanent surveillance assured at the two sites of highest ecological and tourist importance inside the National Park, Dzanga saline (renowned for its high elephant density) and Bai Hokou (site of the tourist activity, Gorilla Tracking), has lead to a decrease in illegal poaching activity in these respective sectors. The threat, however, is ever-present and continuous surveillance will be of vital importance. A long-term strategic plan for surveillance is still to be completed and the Conservation Department is undoubtedly suffering from the lack of a Technical Advisor.

Anti-poaching results, January-September 2003 :

### *Number of different types of anti-poaching activities: January-September 2003*

Type of activity	1 <sup>st</sup> trimester		2 <sup>nd</sup> trimester		3 <sup>rd</sup> trimester		Total 9 months	
	Number of missions	Duration (days)	Number of missions	Duration (days)	Number of missions	Duration (days)	Number of missions	Duration (days)
Forest patrol	52	295	57	352	59	350	168	997
River patrol-national	04	19	05	19	05	21	14	59
Mobile patrols	04	32	03	21	05	33	12	86
Punctual patrols-river & land (short-term or house searches)	10	28	17	46	23	103		
Barrier (Yobé)	13	91	13	91	13	92	39	274
River patrol-trinational	03	13	03	16	00	00	06	29
Ecol. Monitoring-assistance	07	36	00	00	00	00	07	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>1648</b>

Figure: Snares confiscated January – September 2003



\*2003 only three trimester

The anti-poaching effort in this period has been comparable to that of the previous semester (in terms of # of patrols and # of days in the field). Overall, the teams confiscated less wire snares and almost half as much bushmeat during their patrols, when comparing the two subsequent semesters. Under MIKE (Monitoring Illegal Killing of Elephants) assistance and training, the newly recruited responsible of the biological monitoring program and his team have completed the pilot phase of field reconnaissance. Twelve survey transects have been created and assessed in order to test the potential effectiveness of MIKE methodology. A further 132 transects will be monitored in the following year, covering a much larger portion of the protected area system than did previous surveys, which should ultimately provide the Project with the valuable information it needs in order to organize where to concentrate its future anti-poaching activities.

The planned recruitment of new wildlife guards (10) and trackers (3) did not occur, primarily due to the lack of Park Advisor, inadequate collaboration from the Warden and the unavailability of the new National Director (who joined the Project in January 2003 and initially had to attend numerous meetings in Bangui). In May 2003 an unfortunate car accident, involving a Project car carrying 9 wildlife guards, resulting in the death of 1 guard and injuring another 8 guards. This further decreased the capacity of DSP law enforcement activities.

#### Park boundaries

The delimitation and marking of the legal limits of the pre-Park continued during this semester, notably with the eastern sector of the Dzanga pre-Park. Reconnaissance teams also continue to record (GIS) Park limits in the field.

#### Tri-National Collaboration

Both tri-national and bi-national patrols were executed successfully, in the forest and along the Sangha river. These patrols are of fundamental importance in strengthening the concept of a transboundary park in the region.

In May 2003 a meeting was held in Kabo (Congo), another in August 2003 in Ouesso (Congo), to plan joint actions to be undertaken in the following months. Park Wardens from the three adjacent national parks also met in Libongo (Cameroon) to coordinate actions of the tri-national anti-poaching patrols.

#### Infrastructure and equipment

The maintenance of roads, essential to conduct Project activities, is monitored on a regular basis. A new building was constructed near the Project headquarter in order to house the new HF-radio system (with e-mail capacity). A new 4x4 car has been purchased.

#### **Kongana training center**

The political troubles that affected the country also made it difficult for the Conservation Department to focus on more than surveillance activity and the maintenance of regular anti-poaching patrols, rather than investing efforts into the rehabilitation of the Kongana training center, which still remains an imperative objective to accomplish in the near future. For this reason, little progress has been made in the identification and recruitment of competent trainers. Moreover, the lack of initiative of the National Warden and the absence of a Technical Advisor to the Conservation Department has also limited the success of this endeavor.

#### **Cooperation with local population**

Several meetings have been organized with different representatives of the local population. Of particular relevance are the meetings with the 'Comité d'arbitrage locale', which include prominent local authorities: its goal is to follow and find a solution for conflicts between local population and Project activities.

In the wave of the recent ebola epidemic in the neighboring Congo, the Project has also organized a meeting to raise awareness, inform about possible preventive measures and coordinate the sharing of important information, crucial to limit a potential Ebola outbreak in the area.

Objective 2. Economic operators in the Reserve respect the principles of sustainable forestry management

#### **Logging**

The Project program in charge of controlling and monitoring commercial exploitation has been active in regularly meeting with representatives of the operational logging company in the area, SBB (Societe de Bois de Bayanga). The company has been collaborative and is allowing Project supervision of some of its activities, notably concerning field site inspections and control of illegal bushmeat hunting and trade.

The major outputs included:

- Regular inspection of SBB vehicles by the Conservation Department in order to safeguard against the transport of illegal hunters and bushmeat. This has resulted in the company dismissing two of its employees caught in poaching activities.
- Regular technical meetings have been held, with discussions focusing on the management plan and sites of exploitation. Currently the SBB claims larger exploitable surface area than was agreed upon during the establishment of the management plan.
- The Head of the Forest Department of the Sangha-Mbaere region (CDF) has not been openly cooperative. Calendars for controls in the forest have not been respected on several occasions. This partner is important in order to verify SBB's dutiful commitments ('cahier de charge'). The DSP shall seek for ways to improve collaboration in this area.

The DSP has continued its dialogue with the Ministry of 'Eaux and Foret' in an effort to change the status of the corridor between the two sections of the National Park, possibly including it into the Park statute.

#### **Safari hunting**

Only one company has been operating: Aouk-Sangha Safari. Several meetings were held with its representatives in order to present new forms developed for more closely monitoring hunting quotas and recognition of concession limits. It should be noted that the company has respected the recommended quota for bongo (*Tragelaphus euryceros*), as proposed by the DSP. Moreover the company has been very collaborative in sharing information with the PDS regarding illegal activities occurring within its geographical range of activities.

Objective 3. Ecotourism contributes efficiently to the economy and protection of the protected areas

#### **Gorilla Habituation Program**

The successful habituation of one gorilla group (Munye) has allowed, in October 2001, the opening of the Gorilla Tracking Program. Tourists have continued to voice extreme satisfaction with the experience of both tracking and observing gorillas in the dense rainforest.

This Program also became an attraction for popular film companies (e.g., BBC, National Geographic and Discovery Channel), essential for the international promotion of the DSP.

In May 2003 the habituated group lost one member, following the emigration of the only adult female to a neighboring group. This expected and natural event represents a potential setback to the Program, as the Munye are now only a silverback and his juvenile son. Visits have continued, and the few tourists to visit since the female's departure have still expressed satisfaction with their experience.

In light of these events, the habituation of the second group (Makumba) is all the more important and urgent. The teams of the Habituation Program have been able to maintain daily contact with this group since the beginning of February 2003 and reactions from its members show a gradual progression towards the acceptance of human observers. The process of habituation will have to be continued and completed before opening tourism to this group, however, so as to limit the potential risks associated with close encounters with wild, potentially dangerous, gorillas. Revenues generated by the tourist visits to the first group have supported three key members of the habituation team, presently working with the second gorilla group.

#### **Tourism**

The political troubles that affected the country in March 2003, and the consequent change in government personnel, undoubtedly had a negative influence on tourism at Dzanga-Sangha. Indeed, over 50% of the 6-month total tourist visits to DS occurred during the first two months of the year, prior to the coup d'état..

Nevertheless, DSP staff members who work for the tourist facilities have made an effort to maintain the tourist infrastructures in order to be prepared for the arrival of new tourists. Consequently, the Mongambe camp, where visitors can spend the night in the forest, and the Dzanga Bai Mirador, the platform from where the elephants can be observed, have been restructured.

Objective 4. The protected areas' administration functions efficiently

An important contractual transition has been elaborated and established, mostly pertaining to the wildlife guards. With this new contract the guards are more under the direct supervision of the PDS rather than the Ministry of 'Eaux et Forêt'. This change has required considerable administrative effort and created some initial tension, mainly due to miscommunication and misunderstanding by the interested part.

A text is being developed to create a piloting committee ('comité de pilotage') as a facilitator between the PDS and the Ministry of 'Eaux et Forêt'.

The business plan for Dzanga-Sangha and Lobeke is in preparation, following the visit of consultants at Dzanga-Sangha in March 2003.

### **3. Achievements and impact**

Throughout the difficult times of political troubles in CAR, the DSP has kept its regular activities operational, representing the much-needed stability in the region, stressing the importance of appropriate natural resource management as a stabilizing force in a troubled region.

Despite the lack of a strong leadership and a long-term strategic plan for surveillance, anti-poaching activities were operational and often effective. They remain an important tool in

biodiversity preservation. The elephant saline, Dzanga Bai, and the gorilla tracking site, Bai Hokou, received continued surveillance, fundamental to their protection.

MIKE methodologies and analyses are being adopted for the implementation of an improved biomonitoring program, aimed at detecting the effectiveness of anti-poaching activities as much as for the poaching impact upon the wildlife.

The safari hunting company operating in the region has adopted the bongo quota as proposed by the DSP.

The second gorilla group undergoing habituation, to expand tourist visits, is gradually progressing in its acceptance of human presence.

#### **4. Lessons learned and new opportunities**

The DSP is a very ambitious Project, and a vitally important one, but continues to be understaffed. The pressures that accumulate upon the few motivated individuals at key positions can be very discouraging, resulting in further loss of competent personnel. It is thus imperative to maintain a Technical Advisor to the Conservation Department, one of the most important components of the Project, in addition to the numerous other crucial Project posts. The DSP has been a consistent presence in the region now for over 15 years, providing stability and employment. It has been the most consistent and probably has had the largest economic impact of any activity in the province. The Government has been very appreciative of these impacts and has been aware of the importance of Dzanga-Sangha and the role WWF has played in providing stability and relative prosperity in a region plagued by unrest. Even though protecting the rich biodiversity of Dzanga-Sangha remains a challenge the benefits by realizing its ecotourism could provide additional benefits to the country.

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