

USAID/Central Africa Regional

Annual Report

FY 2005

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Central Africa Regional

Performance:

The Congo Basin contains the second largest area of contiguous moist tropical forest in the world. Central Africa's tropical forests (of all types) cover approximately 2 million square kilometers; the Congo Basin's moist deciduous forests cover approximately 1.14 million square kilometers, nearly 20% of the world's remaining area of this biome. Tropical rainforest covers parts of Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Republic of Congo (ROC), Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. These forests form the catchment basin of the Congo River, a watershed of local, regional and global significance. The forests provide valuable ecological services by controlling and buffering climate at a regional scale, and by absorbing and storing excess carbon dioxide released from the burning of fossil fuels, thereby helping to slow the rate of global climate warming.

Of the more than 60 million people that live in the region, about 22 million are located in urban areas. At present rates of population growth, the region is expected to contain 150 million people by the year 2025. Population density is on the whole quite low, with a regional average of 14 persons per square kilometer. There is considerable variation within the region, however, ranging from 4.5 persons/km² in Gabon, to 25.4 persons/km² in Cameroon. While much of the landscape remains sparsely populated, rapid urbanization has created severe localized pressures on forests and other natural resources. Recent deforestation trends have been troubling, and population and economic pressures are building which could further accelerate forest loss in the region.

Oil and mineral revenues for some countries have been declining (Gabon, DRC and Cameroon, for example), while for others they have started to increase (Equatorial Guinea, most notably). Governments and private commercial interests have meanwhile been turning more energetically to the forest as a revenue source, in some cases to compensate for lower oil and mineral revenues, and in others as a response to global demand for tropical timber products.

Conflict has affected many of the Congo Basin countries over the past several years. The sources of the conflict are complex and historic, but are often fueled by rivalry over natural resources including minerals and forest products. This conflict has had a devastating effect on both human and wildlife populations over large areas. Despite these extraordinarily difficult circumstances, national conservation staff supported in most cases by international Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) have managed to protect many key parks and protected areas. In the past few years, several Congo Basin countries have enacted and published new and modern forestry codes as well. These laws provide a framework for conservation and management of the vast tropical forests of the region.

After seven years of operation, the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) shifted its strategic focus and changed the location of its management functions from Washington, DC to Kinshasa, DRC in January 2003. In its first phase, CARPE partners focused on increasing the knowledge of Central African forests and biodiversity, and building institutional and human resources capacity. In the next thirteen years, however, CARPE partners will apply and implement sustainable natural resources management practices in the field, improve environmental governance in the region, and strengthen natural resources monitoring capacity.

It is in the self-interest of the United States Government to support the rational and sustainable development of this region, and at the same time address global environmental concerns. The complex political and economic situation in the region limits USAID's ability to address these important development and environmental challenges on a bilateral basis, because USAID has a physical presence in only two countries in the region. For this reason, a regional approach was taken in implementing

CARPE beginning in 1995. This program was designed to provide: (1) a mechanism to support conservation and sustainable management of natural resources in the tropical forests of Central Africa; and (2) a flexible instrument to carry out an analytical agenda and foster regional coordination in dealing with environmental issues. During this initial phase, African capacity has been enhanced; African institutions supported and African civil society strengthened. This groundwork has created the conditions for more intensive USAID support.

CARPE Phase II has completed the first operational year since the management was shifted to Kinshasa in 2003. The Strategic Objective of CARPE II is to reduce the rate of forest degradation and loss of biodiversity through increased local, national, and regional natural resource management capacity. In the past, conservation strategies were typically developed to fit within protected areas, community lands, or private sector holdings within political boundaries. Over time there has been increasing recognition that wildlife movements, ecological processes, and human influences move across such borders. As a result, conservation efforts that focus solely within the boundaries of national parks, private concessions, and even single countries may not succeed. Addressing natural resources management at a larger scale allows for broader examination of conflicting policies and practices across jurisdictions and land-use regimes. To accommodate a more integrated perspective the CARPE program is taking a landscape level approach to reduce threats to and conserve the biodiversity of the Congo Basin.

Approximately 90% of the CARPE landscapes lie outside of parks and reserves, and are under the de facto or de jure administration of private sector companies. To minimize the adverse environmental impacts of land uses within these areas, CARPE partners collaborate with the private sector, particularly logging and oil companies. Already these partnerships have proven to provide significant payoffs for conservation within the overall landscapes. NGO-private sector partnerships with logging companies in the Basin have worked to eliminate hunting of protected animal species, designate no-cut zones for sensitive wildlife areas, establish local hunting regulations for non-endangered game, minimize the extent of road development, and close down roads following logging. Overall CARPE anticipates that taking this approach will help ensure the effective conservation of protected areas and biodiversity and in turn retain the intrinsic and commodity values of the forest and moist savanna ecosystems of Central Africa so that they can continue to contribute to the livelihoods of local people and the sustainable economic development of these nations.

Challenges: The challenge facing decision makers, the global community and Basin citizens alike is to strike a balance in the conservation of these natural resources to satisfy current needs while protecting the resource base for future generations. This challenge is particularly acute in the face of prolonged political instability and conflict in many of the Basin countries, weak governance institutions, seriously depleted human and institutional capacity and a rapidly growing international demand for both tropical timber products and non-timber forest resources.

The “landscape approach” taken by CARPE focuses on managing large, multiple-use forest zones with high priority for biodiversity conservation. Many of these landscapes overlap two and even three country borders. Coordination among multiple governments, other donors, implementing partners and multiple stakeholders is a substantial management challenge for CARPE and its implementing partners. Several mechanisms are being developed to cope with these management challenges including the concept of “landscape leaders”, steering committees and other structures, but the transaction costs of coordinating multiple actors are significant, while implementation capacity is only now reaching a desirable level.

Because USAID does not have direct agreements with regional host governments and is physically present only in the DRC and Rwanda, an important CARPE challenge is to facilitate positive interaction amongst the U.S. Embassies, the implementing NGO partners, host governments, and regional African institutions. Given the Program’s staffing constraints and the management needs spanning several countries, it is a challenge to evenly address the political, management, administrative, and technical demands of the program.

Key Achievements: The launching of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) has raised the profile and worldwide interest in the overall conservation of the Congo Basin. The United States facilitation of

the CBFP over the past year has greatly solidified the collaborative spirit of the program and has catalysed the dialogue between the international partners. On the ground the CBFP has proved to be a significant collaborative forum to mobilize and engage the political will of the Congo Basin country governments to collaborate on the management and conservation of the Basin resources. USAID's contribution to this partnership is implemented through the CARPE II program's direct support to 11 implementing partners.

FY 2004 marked the first year of CARPE II; program implementation and substantial progress was made towards achieving the annual performance benchmarks. In all CARPE countries, partners have developed relationships with local communities, private and public sectors and other stakeholders towards the creation of land use plans within the target landscapes. CARPE partner collaboration with the private sector has raised the standards for forest management throughout the Congo Basin. Several major logging companies are moving toward forestry certification and in the process have committed to improving management practices through activities such as halting the bush meat trade associated with their concessions.

CARPE is working to improve conservation and sustainable resource management across the Basin in over 65 million hectares. In the Sangha Trinational Landscape, which straddles the borders of Cameroon, ROC, and the CAR, capacity building efforts have led to the creation of a business development plan for the landscape. This plan will form the foundation for the soon to be established Sangha Trinational Trust Fund, the first of its kind in the region. In Gabon, a newly strengthened Gamba Conservation Center was launched as an information hub providing technical support, data and coordination services for all current and potential collaborators in the region.

Generating significant financial resources to support the long-term management of protected areas in the region is a notable challenge that CARPE partners have taken on. Over the past fiscal year, partners have made inroads. In Gabon, business plans for 13 new National parks have been developed, with significant resources already attracted. The national governments of Cameroon, Gabon and the ROC have endorsed landscape management plans for a tri-national landscape, with Global Environment Fund resources over \$10 million already secured.

The CARPE program is reporting on two indicators from the performance monitoring plan to the USAID annual report this year: the number of different use zones (e.g., protected areas, community areas, forestry concessions) within landscapes with sustainable management plans; and, the number of landscapes or other focal areas with forest cover assessments. Eight sustainable management plans are being reported in year one. Seven of the eight sustainable management plans are in Gabon. Shell Gabon manages four separate areas with certified environmental management plans in their oil concession lands located in the protected areas of the Gamba Complex. An additional three logging concessions in northern Gabon are operating under sustainable management plans. The management plans guide the utilization of resources and guarantee that resources are used or harvested at sustainable rates. Although CARPE is reporting zero forest cover assessments for Fiscal Year 2004, by the end of the 2004 calendar year, there will be a very high resolution change map available for the Maringa Lopori Wamba landscape in the DRC. Creating a baseline for deforestation will allow partners to analyze the forest cover change at the landscape level and also allow for the development of immediate responses to areas experiencing higher levels of deforestation. It is expected that over the life of the program, high resolution change maps will be available for most, if not all of the landscapes.

Results Framework

605-001 Reduce the Rate of Forest Degradation and Loss of Biodiversity through Increased Local, National, and Regional Natural Resource Management Capacity

IR1.1 Sustainable natural resources management practices applied

IR1.2 Natural resources governance (institutions, policies, laws) strengthened

IR1.3 Natural resources monitoring institutionalized