

ITTO/IUCN International Workshop on Increasing the Effectiveness of Transboundary Conservation Areas in Tropical Forests

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Transboundary conservation within the context of insecurity: The Case of the Great Lakes Region (Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi): Summary

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Central Africa constitutes one of the world's largest sites of biodiversity richness of which a major part is found in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. However, since 1993, the three countries have been the scenes of socio-political and armed conflicts which have negative effects on the environment and protected areas. This presentation highlights transboundary management of three protected areas: Kibira in Burundi, Virunga in DRC, and Volcanoes in Rwanda. It analyses the opportunities and the challenges of transboundary management of protected areas in the Great Lakes region while making linkages between lessons learnt and the objectives of the World Commission on Protected Area (WCPA).

Factors favouring transboundary management between the three protected areas

The presentation emphasises the following factors favouring transboundary management: unique habitats for certain species of mountain gorilla and chimpanzee species, very high species endemism, regulation of the watershed between the Congo and Nile Basin. The three protected areas are subject to the same threats: rapid deforestation and loss of biodiversity, overexploitation of animal and plant species, reduction of natural regeneration because of the invasive species like lianas, soil erosion after deforestation.

Main challenges faced by these Parks

- Human populations around these parks are subject to the following challenges: armed conflicts, growth of the poverty of populations, insufficient agricultural land
- Parks are affected by surface reduction, and a weak legal dialogue.
- The complexity of stakeholders and the lack of coordination are in part the origin of many different factors: armed bands, mining companies, rural populations, administrations, researchers, religious communities, customary authorities, local NGOs, logging companies, fishers, indigenous people...

Analysis of the main transboundary management issues

- *Political level:* these parks constitute a battle field between rebels and regular army;
- *Institutional level:* capacity building of rural populations, participation, collaboration with institutions at the national level;
- *Implementing international conventions and regional agreements:* linkage between national strategies and plans of actions for the CBD, implementation strategies, lack of a framework in the implementation of international conventions;
- *Managerial level:* protected areas are managed under the tutelage of technical and scientific state-controlled institutions: National Institute for Nature Conservation and Environment in Burundi (INECN), Congolese National Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN), Rwandan Office of Tourism and National Parks (ORTPN). However, they lack skilled management;

- *Technical level:* Management plans, only simple management plans exist mainly related to the poaching problem;
- *Transboundary management:* dialogue between stakeholders, transboundary control of illegal exploitation, sub-regional and international trade of species.

Conclusion: The problems reflect the necessity of taking into account all aspects that do not necessarily directly depend on the situation in these Parks.

Contribution of the different conservation agencies and their partners

To define all partners' intervention strategies and link them with transboundary management:

- IUCN (Parks for Peace Initiative): a warning system for problems, code of conduct for management of forest concessions, co-ordination, support to war victims;
- United Nations Agencies (FAO, WFP, UNRHC, UNESCO): emergencies, reforestation, agroforestry;
- International Program for Gorilla Conservation: surveillance, monitoring of gorillas and their habitat;
- Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund: surveillance, rehabilitation of infrastructures;
- Support Project of Conference on Central African Moist Forest Ecosystem (CEFDHAC): domestication of indigenous trees;
- CARE international : plantation, agroforestry;
- INECN, ICCN, ORTPN : technical coordination.

Some frameworks that might favour transboundary management

- Great Lakes Countries Economic Community (CEPGL);
- CEFDHAC: Code of conduct, Regional Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for environmental and biodiversity resources of the Congo Basin ecosystems;
- UNESCO initiatives;
- Dialogue between technical staff;

Lessons learnt and ties with the WCPA

The lessons learnt correspond with the priorities of WCPA:

- Influence of the political and socio-economic environment on protected area management. This ties in with WCPA's emphasis on "benefits beyond boundaries";
- The need to achieve a common vision on transboundary issues by all stakeholders;
- The impacts of decreased incomes generated by tourism because of the war;
- The need to redefine the policy of transboundary management of these protected areas, especially because the threats on these resources are enormous;
- Protected areas should not only be integrated in the socio-economic context of the sub-region but also within the priorities of each country;
- Experiments with certain tools: code of conduct, sustainable management of forest concessions;
- Reinforce certain actions: insist on partnerships between stakeholders;
- Divergence between international policies on support in time of war and the small amount of money actually supplied to the countries to support these policies.