

EC Partner

National institutions of Congo, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Facts and Figures

- EC contribution: €38,2 million (100% of the project)
- Duration: 2005-2010
- The first ECOFAC programme was launched in 1992
- Together ECOFAC I, II, III have committed more than €70 million



**EUROPEAN
COMMISSION**

Natural resources

Conservation and rational use of forest ecosystem in Central Africa (ECOFAC IV)

Thanks to the great importance of forest ecosystem in the Congo Basin, Central Africa concentrates an exceptional richness in terms of animal and plant biodiversity. Its preservation and management are a major challenge for the planet in the fight against climate change.

Jean-Michel Sionneau, Project coordinator.

**Context**

The forests of Central Africa represent the second largest block of rainforest on Earth and are among the richest in terms of biodiversity. Over the past 20 years, biodiversity in the area has been threatened by deforestation. Moreover, bush meet trade supplying urban centres further challenges the forest wildlife, whose capacity for regeneration is in the long-term seriously compromised.

Objective

- Conserve biodiversity through an improved management of protected areas.
- Promote a rational exploitation of forest resources towards sustainable development.
- Encourage cooperation to develop and implement regional solutions.

Impact

- 180 000Km² of forests managed as protected areas. Management techniques promoted and forest data collected and inserted in a database allowing rapid management decisions.
- Reconnaissance surveys and biological inventories carried out in the seven countries. Parks infrastructures (bridges, tracks) repaired.
- Eco-tourism activities promoted as alternative sources of revenue through trainings, infrastructure and circuit building.
- Regional meetings with institutions of the seven countries held twice a year to exchange experiences and develop regional strategies.
- Alternatives to hunting supported through trainings (carpentry, brick making etc), new farming techniques and exploitation of forest resources.

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2009: international year of gorillas. ECOFAC strengthens actions for the sensibilisation on the threats big apes face.

In 2009 ECOFAC, together with UNESCO, the Museum of French Natural History and the French Cooperation, is supporting the programme "Big apes and their habitat", promoting the conservation of big apes, currently dying out.

In particular, this initiative targets those children that live close to areas where big apes are located, to inform them on the lives of apes and of the challenges they face.

Awareness has been raised through a 'travelling tool box' that will tour many different schools in Central Africa. The box includes information and data on big apes anatomy, on their behaviour, their ecology, their number and localisation, and on the threats apes have to face.

Through the information contained in the box, children will become aware of the importance of protecting big apes and will learn how to act to promote their survival, and the conservation of the areas in which they live.

In Uganda in the first 10 months of 2008, the tool box was used in 52 schools and 2600 children were involved in the project. It has been observed that children's awareness and knowledge of big apes increased greatly thanks to exposure to information and activities included in the box (up to 80% of the children targeted are now informed).

In Gabon, the project started in July 2008 and up to now, already 1500 children and several hundreds adults have participated, with the tool box travelling to 35 schools.

Sabrina Krief, Canopée N° 28, September 2009



Big Apes in Central Africa