



The African Model Forest Network

Development of a Regional Model Forest Network in Africa

The Congo Basin in Central Africa is home to the second largest area of humid tropical forest on the planet, after the Amazon region. Forest degradation, however, is a major issue in many areas, often as a result of pressures from mining and logging as well as from population growth and poverty.

Cameroon contains a significant portion of the forests of the Congo Basin. With almost 90 % of Africa's ecosystems represented in Cameroon, the biodiversity of the country's humid forest zone is considered to be one of the richest in central Africa. Forestry plays a key role in Cameroon's social fabric, providing employment, recreation and cultural identity. Cameroon is also the largest exporter and second largest producer of forest products in Africa.

Forest policy reforms were introduced by the Cameroon government in the mid-1990s to address the problems of resource degradation, but were having limited success because of implementation difficulties. Then, in 2002, the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) approached the International Model Forest Network (IMFN) Secretariat with the idea of collaborating on Model Forest development in Cameroon.

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In the African context, Model Forests are seen as long-term change vehicles owned and governed by local stakeholders. This arrangement gives the stakeholders the ability to go beyond the usual short-cycle project schemes while making the best use of both local and external resources.

— Joachim Nguiebouri and Chimère Diaw
African Model Forest Network Secretariat, Cameroon



Together, CIFOR and the IMFN introduced the Model Forest approach to the region, working with Cameroon's forest administration, local partners and a host of international agencies, including the Canadian International Development Agency, the Central African Forest Commission, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. In 2005, two Model Forests were identified – Campo Ma'an in the south and Dja et Mpomo in the east – to serve as pilot sites for the entire Congo Basin.

Since 2005, Campo Ma'an and Dja et Mpomo have established governance and management structures, formalized partnerships (local, regional and international) and initiated a variety of local projects aimed at building the capacity of

This initiative is supporting an African Model Forest Network Secretariat established in 2009 in Yaoundé, Cameroon, to build on the pilot work in two Model Forests in Cameroon. The objective is to show the value of the Model Forest approach in the African context, and to create a viable African Model Forest Network by 2013.

The African Model Forest Initiative

Funded by Canada, the African Model Forest Initiative is supporting activities in five key areas:

- Establishing Model Forests in the Congo Basin and francophone Mediterranean regions of Africa (Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria)
- Developing a network in each of these regions through which Model Forest practitioners can share knowledge and innovations that will strengthen policy, regulation and development at the community, local and regional levels
- Promoting and supporting alternative economic opportunities for local people to enhance community development and the sustainable management of local forest resources
- Building capacity and supporting innovation in the sustainable management of local resources
- Documenting and sharing lessons learned from all aspects of the initiative with others in the regions and throughout the IMFN

The African Model Forest Network is using the lessons learned from the Model Forests in Cameroon to support the expansion of the Model Forest concept in other countries on the continent.

local people to develop sustainable, income-generating enterprises. Strategic planning exercises have used processes that aim to ensure that all voices are heard, including those of women, indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups who live there.

The African Model Forest Initiative was launched in 2009 by Natural Resources Canada and is managed by the IMFN Secretariat. It aims to improve the conservation and sustainable management of forest-based natural resources in francophone Africa, including the Congo Basin and Mediterranean regions, through Model Forests.

Looking Forward

The African Model Forest Network is using the lessons learned from the Model Forests in Cameroon to support the expansion of the Model Forest concept in other countries on the continent. Work is already moving ahead quickly in the Democratic Republic of Congo following the launch in 2010 of Model Forest development processes in three provinces of the country. Other processes are at an early stage in the Republic of Congo and other countries in central and western Africa. And at the ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests held in New York in early 2011, the IMFN Secretariat announced that it would be assisting Rwanda in developing the Model Forest approach under the auspices of its Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative.

To better support these new processes, the IMFN Secretariat is developing exciting collaborations with partners such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature and its Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration, the International Tropical Timber Organization, and the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat, among others.

Milestones

- 2005** International Model Forest Network designates Campo Ma'an and Dja et Mpomo as Model Forests
- 2006** First General Assemblies of Campo Ma'an and of Dja et Mpomo
- 2008** Memorandums of Understanding signed with World Wildlife Fund, International Union for Conservation of Nature, and the Canadian Model Forest Network
- 2009** Collaboration begins between the Campo Ma'an and Dja et Mpomo Model Forests in Cameroon and Canada's Lac-Saint-Jean Model Forest
The African Model Forest Network is established, with a regional Secretariat based in Yaoundé, Cameroon
- 2010** National committee established to support Model Forest development in Democratic Republic of Congo
Representatives from the Africa Forests Research Initiative on Conservation and Development (AFRICAD) and Canada's Lac-Saint-Jean Model Forest, University of British Columbia and FPInnovations examine opportunities for collaborating to stimulate small enterprise development in Cameroonian Model Forests
- 2011** IMFN announces its intent to work with Rwanda in the context of its Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative

Left: Wood harvested and cut in Cameroonian Model Forest

Right: Women from the Model Forests in Cameroon sell their locally made products during an agricultural fair





CASE STUDY

Protecting Biodiversity and Providing Income

Once abundant in Cameroon's forests, giant African snails were consumed only by village elders, a convention that protected the snails from over-harvesting and helped guarantee the continuity of the species. Today, however, snails are much in demand because they are high in protein and the amino acid lysine (sold in supplement form for its various health benefits). Snail by-products are also used in the production of animal food.

Heliciculture, or the raising of snails, is contributing to the sustainable management of the Campo Ma'an Model Forest. A heliciculture project has been initiated in the Campo Ma'an Model Forest with the aim of protecting giant African snails and providing an alternative source of food and income for local residents, which in turn reduces poaching. Raising snails also helps to promote the proliferation of earth worms, further enriching the soil and contributing to conservation efforts.

Research on the giant African snails is continuing in the Campo Ma'an Model Forest, as is further exploration of ways to sustainably develop heliciculture in order to benefit local communities.



Giant African snail farming in Campo Ma'an Model Forest, Cameroon

CASE STUDY

Better Living from the Forest through International Collaboration

They are thousands of kilometres apart, but the Campo Ma'an and Dja et Mpomo Model Forests in Cameroon and the Lac-Saint-Jean Model Forest in Canada are united in a common cause: building a forest-based economy through collective management of their resources. Through financial support from the African Model Forest Initiative, the three Model Forests have been collaborating closely since 2008.

In January 2009, the general manager of the Lac-Saint-Jean Model Forest travelled to Cameroon with a wood lathe, sandpaper, urethane glue, chisels and 200 pen mechanisms. He trained three skilled carpenters in the production of producing wooden pens from exotic wood residues, left over from logging operations in the Dja et Mpomo Model Forest. The project quickly translated into a much-needed economic boost for the carpenters who, within 10 months, had sold more than 700 pens at US\$20 each, trained two additional carpenters and reinvested the earnings in the business. It also inspired other Model Forest partners to look at other forest goods they could sustainably produce and market, such as edible giant snails.

In September 2010, representatives from the Lac-Saint-Jean Model Forest and FPInnovations (the world's largest private, not-for-profit forest research institute) and researchers from the University of British Columbia and the AFRICAD network visited Campo Ma'an and Dja et Mpomo. They met with Model Forest partners to discuss new ways to stimulate economic development and entrepreneurship. They also visited sawmills, woodworking plants, a hevea (rubber) processing plant, community forests, nurseries and heliciculture projects.

The visit opened new avenues for collaboration and the three Model Forests plan to continue to work together in areas such as forest inventory, certification, marketing and distribution.

The making of wooden pens in Dja et Mpomo Model Forest, Cameroon

