



Wildlife Conservation Capacity Development in Central Africa

Malabo,
Equatorial Guinea
12 June 2019



A ranger on patrol in Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Credit: Virunga National Park

On Wednesday, June 12, 2019, 22 participants from 15 institutions attending the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) Council Meeting and the High Level Dialogue in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, met to discuss a range of issues concerning Wildlife Conservation Capacity Development in Central Africa. This side event was a follow-on to the November 2019 CBFP Capacity Development Roundtable Discussions in Brussels, Belgium. Participants included Central African and international government agencies, NGOs, private sector and donors.

Capacity development for wildlife conservation in Central Africa continually needs strengthening to address the growing threats impacting wildlife and their habitats. Central African government agencies, donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and universities regularly support the efforts of individuals, teams, organizations, and constituencies to develop, enhance, and organize their systems, resources, and knowledge to perform functions, solve problems, and achieve wildlife conservation objectives.

Conservation is a long-term proposition. We measure our success in the successful conservation of species and their habitats. Long life cycles of many of the wildlife species we protect require thinking not in 1-3 year grant cycles but rather in decades. Capacity development is also a long-term proposition. Human and institutional capacity is not created and sustained through attainment of a single degree or completion of a week-long training course. Rather, ongoing learning and training is needed by all of us throughout our careers for so many obvious reasons. Unfortunately, donors often provide short-term project funding to achieve specific short-term objectives; however, long-term systematic workforce planning is essential to develop capacity for organizations, both within NGOs and government as well as the private sector. By sharing collective efforts, partners can avoid duplication of effort and learn from each other on new approaches and best practices in capacity building.

The purpose of the CBFP June 2019 Side Event in Malabo was to:

- Launch the CBFP Working Group on Wildlife Conservation Capacity Development in Central Africa, and to expand participation.
- Discuss what the Group plans to achieve

- Discuss priorities, gaps and opportunities for wildlife conservation capacity development in the region
- Determine most effective methods of communication and information sharing among the CBFP Working Group members
- Share current support and priority efforts.

The welcome statement was given by Francis TARLA, Director of the Central Africa Bushmeat Action Group (CABAG), who noted that there are many opportunities for capacity development in Central Africa with examples like the Garoua Wildlife College, many others under RIFFEAC, the network of training institutions in conservation and natural resources exploitation in the Congo Basin as well as training initiatives by NGOs. However, there was still insufficient (quantity and especially quality wise) human resources in the domain of conservation in the region. It is therefore very strategic for the CBFP to have a group of experts who meet regularly to reflect on the needs, priorities and opportunities for wildlife conservation capacity building in Central Africa.

Capacity Development can be defined as “The ability of individuals, teams, organizations, and constituencies to develop, enhance, and organize their systems, resources and knowledge; all reflected in their abilities, individually and collectively, to perform functions, solve problems, and achieve objectives.” (Adapted from IUCN and OECD)

Capacity Development will depend upon how it is applied at the following **levels**:

- 1) Individual
- 2) Team
- 3) Constituency
- 4) Organization
- 5) Systemic.

There are **many example of conservation capacity building actors** in Central Africa with many different organizations conducting training including: WWF, WCS, AWF, ZSL, GIZ, UCLA. Many donors have been supporting capacity development in the region such as the European Union, German Cooperation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Agency for International Development, United Nations Development Program, Belgian Development Cooperation, African Development Bank, Foundations (e.g. John Paul II, Prince of Monaco), National Governments, Regional Bodies (e.g. CEEAC, PACEBCO, RAPAC), etc.

Conclusions of the November 2018 CBFP Wildlife Conservation Capacity Development Roundtable in Brussels were to:

- Challenge Donors and partners to work together over the long-term to support workforce capacity development.
- Recommend that the CBFP Working Group on Wildlife Conservation Capacity Development discuss synergies, share opportunities and resources.
- Advise the CBFP to create a webpage to share training opportunities.

Since the Roundtable, there has been:

- Bimonthly circulation of training opportunities
- Regular sharing of publications and reports on conservation capacity building activities.

Recommendations from the June 2019 Side Event:

- Experts should work together to develop and test strategies and scale up success in the area of capacity development in the entire region.
- Capacity building requires financing for activities to be implemented. Wildlife experts should work to apply for joint finances to run for long periods and with a wider coverage.
- There is need to approach decision makers, who are not in the domain, to facilitate training of wildlife personnel.
- Joint training by wildlife officials from different countries of the region are needed so they can work together and learn how to address transboundary challenges (e.g. sending officials together to the Garoua Wildlife College for training).
- Training opportunities should be shared early enough since getting clearance from some government administrations take a long time.
- There is a need to enhance the capacities of local populations to manage their own resources.
- Anthropological aspects should be taken into consideration as many projects have not achieved set objectives because cultural aspects were neglected.
- It is important to organize translation of capacity development information into Spanish, Portuguese, French and English to make it accessible across the region.
- CBFP facilitation should institute Wildlife Conservation Capacity Building sessions at its regular Meetings of Parties.

The Expectations of Participants of the CBFP Capacity Development Working Group include:

- Facilitating financing of capacity development projects
- Reflecting on trainings adapted to challenges like armed conflicts
- Ensuring that conservation curricula are adapted to real life situations
- Enhancing capacity development actions related to human rights as the situation is becoming more complex
- Scaling up training for populations to manage their resources
- Holding regular sessions at CBFP Meetings of the Capacity Development Working Group.

Bimonthly List of Training Opportunities:

To sign up for the informal bimonthly list of training opportunities, please contact:
nancy_gelman@fws.gov ; francis.tarla@cabag-network.org