



“Fighting Poverty and Engaging Conservation through Sounds”

A workshop against poverty organized by African Centre for Community and Development

With collaboration from Limbe Botanic Garden and other stakeholders.

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Author's note

There has been worrying questions raised as to the incompatibility of poverty alleviation and conservation schemes. These arguments come from examples like the havocs caused by man eating lions from conserved areas around East African village communities, to the over-exploitation of Cross River gorillas by local communities around the Takamanda project. As much as some of these arguments are relevant, there are other points that suggest that both concepts are workable if environmental dynamics are understood and well exploited in interventions aimed at poverty alleviation and conservation in vulnerable communities. The possible issues to be considered in stringing both concepts in holistic interventions include:

- Whether coupling conservation and poverty alleviation is workable in a particular context.
- Whether decoupling conservation and poverty alleviation are the best intervention designs for a particular context.
- Whether alternatives to replacing particular dependencies in a livelihoods option are the same in value to that option or are better. It will be likely difficult for instance to encourage forest-animal hunters in Mount Fako forest region of Cameroon to switch to fishing in the West Coast of Limbe if the latter option is marred by unsustainable fish harvesting methods like twin trawling or the dumping of agro-industrial chemicals which are harmful to marine life and nurseries. The alternatives in these instances are simply not better and have not ended the embedding of poverty among groups that depend on the tools. (<http://www.africancentreforcommunity.com/Why%20Forest%20Conservation%20in%20South%20West%20of%20Cameroon%20is%20a%20problem%201By%20Arrey%20Mbongaya%20Ivo.%202008%20African%20Centre%20for%20Community%20and%20De.pdf>).
- The possibilities of pro-poor tourism and eco-tourism as with Tourism Black Economic Empowerment schemes in South Africa must be x-rayed. Tourism BEE has arguably created jobs for poaching communities in game ranches, hotels and restaurants hence increasing the general quota of Blacks in conservation and tourism businesses (Marshall, 2005)
- The opportunities of maintaining original biodiversity while engaging in intensive agriculture hence the emergence of agro-ecology and conservation agriculture as

modern instruments to poverty alleviation, empowering communities and conserving nature (*“Rewilding North America: a vision for conservation in the 21st Century”*. Washington DC. Island Press 2004).

- The need to understand the processes in particular cultural and livelihoods contexts (de Haan and Zoomers, 2005). This helps understanding of issues like power relations, gender etc and traditional knowledge systems which impact incidentally on the understanding of traditional conservation practices in particular systems increasingly accepted to be in the hands of women.
- Being aware of elite capture of intervention resources aimed at poverty alleviation and conservation in many parts of the world will help in designing safeguards for accessing donor money.
- It is also imperative to understand institutional and financial tools put in place to curb or fight corruption in order to ensure a healthy environment in which funds for community driven development will reach targeted audiences or that sustainable livelihoods approaches will attain holism.
- A more vital link between conservation and poverty alleviation can be exploited by understanding the link between climate change, poverty, traditional knowledge systems on climate change (Shah and Ameta, 2008) and the impact of the incidences of climate change to poor countries like droughts, poor harvests, rise in flood levels, biodiversity loss etc with a corresponding lack in capacities including technologies to cut down the impact of climate change in already vulnerable communities. Making links at micro and macro levels and horizontally and vertically will allow for a thorough understanding of contexts in intervention design and implementation. It will make conservation workable when it is necessary and necessary when it is possible and probable. This consideration will intend impact on financial strategies in given projects on poverty alleviation and conservation. Strategies will be based on informed data on environments and stakeholders. This suggests pre-feasibility or feasibility studies as imperative inroads to better development management as a whole and schemes aimed at poverty alleviation and conservation.
- More so, it is imperative to consider communal perspectives to conservation and poverty in order to link both concepts within a particular context or to separate them. These points augurs well with scholars like Hall and Midgley (2004) on various perspectives to poverty and others who prescribe the need for subjective

and objective well being analyses in the design and implementation of interventions (Arrey, 2008).

Thus due to the seriousness of today's contemporary debates like climate change, conservation, poverty alleviation etc and the relevance of these debates to instruments like MDGs especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, African Centre for Community and Development with collaboration from Limbe Botanic Garden organized on the 19th of July, a workshop in Isokolo Limbe on the theme "Fighting Poverty and Engaging Conservation through Sounds 2009" as a follow up of another activity "Outreaching to Orphans 2009" that entailed a tree planting session at Save the Children Alliance in Bota Limbe. The intention of the 19th of July workshop was to:

- Sensitize people at different levels on the issue of poverty
- Package poverty in holism in order to deliberate and design best methods to fight it.
- Make links between conservation and poverty alleviation and the empowering of communities.
- Make links between gender and conservation and the fight against poverty.
- Make links between the above listed issues and corruption in the embedding of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Create a working synergy with representatives from various NGOs and stakeholders in the community to increase awareness, better governance on conservation, poverty alleviation and sustainable development management.
- Enhance information sharing and learning in a society with marginal access to ICTs, libraries or research and Development so as to increase capacities in fighting poverty, engaging conservation and empowering communities.
- Make the relevance of active citizens, QUANGOS and partnerships in today's collaborative agenda (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002) and development management in Cameroon and Africa.
- Embedding communication networks as unavoidable tools to stable government and social systems in the 21st century and in maximising ownership of interventions aimed at poverty alleviation, conservation in Cameroon and Africa.

The use of "Sounds" in the theme is a flexible onomatopoeia which intimated the African Centre for Community and Development's move to be more vocal about fighting poverty and engaging collaboration in this part of the world. Sounds tallied also with the organizer's inclusion of musicians from Douala, Limbe and Tiko to sing for the occasion. They offered much needed musical interludes after the presentations of each speaker and also at the

arrival of participants and during entertainment after presentations. It was the first ever workshop in this part of the world to be spiced with reflective music and with the capacity to bring un-invited onlookers to the pertinent issues about poverty and conservation in this part of the world.

Besides, topics presented also matched the broad thematic areas of the day. They included:

- “Implications of biodiversity conservation in fighting poverty and empowering communities”.
- “The impact of corruption on Poverty (poverty and corruption)”.
- “Curbing Poverty by involving women in Conservation”.
- “Management, Technology and Poverty (You are your greatest resource)”.
- “Can Patrons, Sub-Patrons and Mini-Patrons be the reason for slow market entries in Sub-Saharan Africa?”

With participants coming from diverse back grounds, the workshop succeeded to translate itself in diversity as with the pluriform of states in which poverty can be found and measured or that conservation can take. It is hoped that African Centre for Community and Development and her collaborators from Limbe Botanic Garden, Positive Global Coalition, Pan African Institute etc will be supported by capable development and donor institutions to spread the outreach of these campaigns and to engage in more vocal surges towards fighting poverty and engaging conservation in Cameroon and possibly Africa.

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Left: Arrey Mbongaya Ivo
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<http://twitter.com/positveglobe>



Preliminary meeting to “Fighting poverty and engaging conservation through sounds 2009” at Bifunde Communications Centre Limbe between Joseph Mbelle (Limbe Botanic Garden), Elizabeth Mary Itare (Pan African Institute) and Arrey Mbongaya Ivo (African Centre for Community and Development).

The 19th of July 2009 marked a classical and effective turning point in development management in Cameroon, Africa and possibly the world. The African Centre for Community and Development (<http://www.africancentreforcommunity.com>) under the leadership of her Founder and Director Arrey Mbongaya Ivo organized a development workshop with collaboration from Limbe Botanic Gardens in Isokolo Cameroon styled “Fighting Poverty and Engaging Conservation through Sounds”. It was the first ever academic workshop in the country that was spiced with reflective musical interludes from a makeshift band of professional musicians from Douala, Tiko and Limbe. The band was

headed by pianist and singer “Matilo” from Limbe Palace orchestra and boosted by other artists like Pehtit Mude, Mr Drums from the 3813 Orchestra in Tiko, Eugene Banjo Oluwa who was recently finalist in Cameroon national youth musical competition.

Among the presenters was the Head of Administration of Limbe Botanic Gardens Mr Joseph Mbelle, Head of Positive Global Coalition Mr Ndip Arrey Kingsley, Miss Elizabeth Mary Itare of the Pan African Institute, Buea, Mr Teghen Fobinyam Ndenecho who is an independent development consultant and the Director of African Centre for Community and Development Mr Arrey Mbongaya Ivo. The moderator of the event was Mr Henry Allotey of Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC).

Mr Joseph Mbelle presented a paper on “Implications of biodiversity conservation in fighting poverty and empowering communities”. In this paper he highlighted climate change and its incidences on poor communities and the importance of plants globally, as carbon traps for carbon trading and specifically threatened *Gnetum africanum* locally called “Eru” as an enterprise tool in empowering sustainable communities.

Mr Ndip Arrey Kingsley of Positive Global Coalition presented “The impact of corruption on Poverty (poverty and corruption)”. He buttressed the argument that corruption was the main driver to poverty in Africa and made a positive philosophical attempt to define and link the concepts of poverty and corruption despite some academic barriers or the tediousness of the task. He propounded that both government and the citizenry are culprits in the malice of corruption and people must first learn to x-ray themselves before blaming government as much of corruption was only possible due to the attitudes of people first.

Mr Teghen Fobinyam Ndenecho presented “Management, Technology and Poverty (You are your greatest resource)”. He painted inroads to possible links between traditional knowledge systems and modern technologies and poverty. He called on people and institutions to assume the right and urgent culture of implanting modern technologies necessary for boosting competitive advantage in a highly technological, global and business arena.

Miss Elizabeth Mary Itare from Pan African Institute, Buea elaborated on “Curbing Poverty by involving women in Conservation”. She made analysis to Bekora snail-women gatherers in Ndian Division who were breadwinners and also custodians of agricultural knowledge systems. She also imported other livelihoods systems where in women were keepers not only of agricultural knowledge but of local conservation knowledge systems hence unavoidable in effecting sustainable conservation and poverty alleviation schemes in Cameroon and Africa.

The Founder and Director of African Centre for Community and Development attacked the system of “mutated patronage” and cronyism as critical to African poverty and underdevelopment. He presented “Can Patrons, Sub-Patrons and Mini-Patrons be the reason for slow market entries in Sub-Saharan Africa?”

<http://community.eldis.org/falcazo/Blog/Can-Patrons--Sub-patrons-and-Mini-Patrons-be-the-reason-for-slow-market-entries-in-Sub-Saharan-Africa>). He and other delegates answered questions on best policies and ideas to redeem Africa and Cameroon from poverty and underdevelopment.

Participants included a representative of Baptist Hospital Mutengene Dr Edouard, who hails from Congo DR, Mr Basil Asah Azefer of AYOUSED (NGO), Mekembon Yves

Nathan from the Ministry of Forestry, Mojoko Christina Fike who is the Head of Limbe Botanic Garden Nursery Unit, Catholic Youths from Ngeme and the West Coast of Limbe represented by Mr Baiye Elvis, Local Snail dealers represented by “Ahidjo”, Ewune Lisuke of Limbe Botanic Garden, Representatives of Isokolo Traditional council, Representative of Limbe Urban Council, Mr Abang Makia of RMU Accra-Ghana, Mr. Azefor Victor (IT consultant, Bifunde Communications Centre), Representative of Save the Children Alliance Orphanage Bota and many others from diverse works of life.

They enjoyed life music and were pleased to listen to a specially composed song on “fighting poverty and engaging conservation through sounds” by the able orchestra as well as a praise song titled “Sango Loba” by Arrey Mbongaya Ivo in Douala and Latin. Other musical highlights included Michael Jackson’s Earth song and “We are the world” Francis Bebe’s “Ediba”, Henry Dikonge’s “C’est la vie”, “Africa Unite” and personal compositions from band members including “Saving Cross River Gorilla”, ozone depletion etc by Black Phase represented by Eugene Banjo Olua.

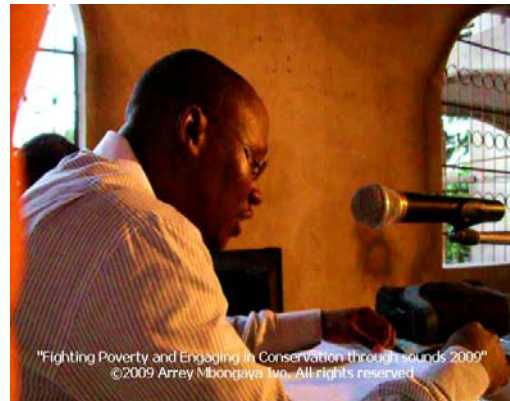
Then of course after the formation of a working synergy of workshop participants, there was eating and drinking and a thank you speech from the Director of African Centre for Community and Development Mr Arrey Mbongaya Ivo in which he called for the need to cut across boundaries (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002), mobilize social capital (Putnam, 1993) and create holistic sustainable partnerships unavoidable for development in Cameroon and Africa.

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“Fighting Poverty and Engaging Conservation through Sounds 2009” (Pictures)



Above left; Elizabeth Mary of Pan African Institute (Buea). Above Right: Teghen Fobinyam Ndenecho (Consultant)
Below left: Ndip Arrey Kingsley (Positive Global Coalition) Above right: Joseph Mbelle (Limbe Botanic Garden)



Right:
Workshop
Organizer:
Arrey
Mbongaya Ivo
(African Centre
for Community
and
Development)
Far right: Henry
Alloteh
(moderator
from CDC)





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Left and right: Guest at the workshop on Fighting Poverty and Engaging conservation through Sounds 2009



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Left: Musician Eugene Banjo Oluwa
Right: Guitarist and singer Pehtit Mude responsible for musical engine



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Left: Mr Bass from 3813 Orchestra Tiko.
Right: Band Leader for the occasion Matilo Njielo (Limbe Palace Orchestra)



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Left: Participants are overwhelmed with presentations
Right: Arrey Mbongaya Ivo sings "Sango Loba" his personal song.



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Left:
Collaborators
catch the eyes of
the camera



Right: Arrey
Mbongaya Ivo
poses with
supportive
musicians of the
event.



Left: Workshop
had good food for
participants.



Right: Eating was
fulfilling after
development
issues and a light
dose of music.



Left and Right:
Workshop
participants
entertain
themselves.
There was eru
(Gnetum
africanum) to
remind all of
the need to
conserve the
plant



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