

## Governance and Sustainability of Wildlife in Logging Concessions in northern Republic of the Congo (ROC)

**GERMAIN A. MAVAH**

I spent last summer 2010 in Ngombé forest management unit adjacent to Odzala-Kokoua National Park (OKNP) in northern ROC. In this area, several peripheral influences contribute to reduced wildlife populations and so conservation efforts are still needed.

Ngombé forest management unit is the largest forest concession in northern Congo with a size of 1,159,643 hectares, and it is currently allocated to the second largest logging company in ROC. And OKNP is the largest Park in ROC with about 1,360,000 hectares, created in 1935. It is one of the few sites left in Africa with a forest habitat and mammal population so rich and relatively intact. It contains very high populations of mammals including forest elephants, gorillas, chimpanzees, bongo, buffalo and leopard.

To reduce threats to wildlife and encourage sustainable management practices in the OKNP buffer zone, a collaborative effort was introduced by the Ministry of Forest Economy, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and the logging company Industrielle Forestiere de Ouessou (IFO) in 2005. This is a new partnership in this area regarding conservation strategies. Although local communities have been involved in the process of zoning of traditional territories, I am concerned that their participation in conservation innovations remains passive, and this study is seeking to find out why.

Thus, during summer 2010, I collected data which concerned governance and sustainability of wildlife in logging concessions adjacent to the national park in northern ROC. I have investigated potential factors likely to influence the participation of local people in wildlife management strategies. This



participation is subject to several factors such as the value wildlife for local people, its contribution to their income, their recognition of threats, potential solutions, or obstacles to success of management initiatives and formal wildlife regulations as well as their memberships and their willingness to participate in collective action and the level of social trust and cohesion in the community. All these factors influence local behavior in regards to the use of a given resource such as wildlife in northern of ROC.

Fieldwork in this area has been demanding and satisfying. As a researcher, my hope is that my work contributes to better understandings of why local people are passive in wildlife management strategies. I do believe that this study is a starting point to communicate between local communities, conservation NGOs, private companies and the Congolese Government.

*Germain A. Mavah is a MSc student in Interdisciplinary Ecology. His research was funded in part through the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Tropical Conservation and Development (TCD) and Center for African Studies. He is currently a Beinecke African Conservation Scholar.*