

# Human Livelihoods Assessment in the Republic of Congo

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I conducted a pre-dissertation field research in the periphery of the future Ntokou-Pikounda national park (NPNP) and Odzala-Kokoua national park (OKNP) in northern ROC during the summer 2012. My research seeks to understand the current status of livelihoods of people who have traditional access to natural resources in the future protected area (NPNP) and those who live nearby existing protected area (OKNP). I want also to determine whether rural livelihoods differ between these two communities. This will allow monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the relationship between local livelihoods and the park practices by adding research evidence to the continuing debate on the impacts of protected areas on local livelihoods. This study is part of a larger collaborative program regarding forest resources management plans which seeks to promote community-based organizations as a way to increase local control on forest resources -- especially wildlife

-- in ROC. It is also a part of my dissertation's topic: "Can Rural People Participate in Natural Resources Management? An Analysis of Wildlife Governance Institutions, Local Capacity, and Human Livelihoods in Tropical Forests."

To collect data, I conducted a cross-sectional study to measure current conditions of livelihoods and to compare their variation between the two categories of villages in the periphery of OKNP and in the border of the future NPNP. These two types of villages are respectively located at the West and the South of the forest concession of Ngombé (1,159,643 ha). As activities, I started to carry out dialogues with many actors interested in conservation of natural resources such as Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS-Congo national program) and project of the management of ecosystems adjacent to OKNP. WCS-Congo national program currently provides technical assistance to the creation of Ntokou-Pikounda national park. These dialogues aim to investigate and take into account local needs

in my research. I conducted a survey of 90 household heads in 15 rural villages of both categories by using questionnaires.

Results of this study show that livelihoods between forest dwellers living around NPNP and OKNP are different. Several factors influence this variation such as their proximity to markets and roads. In addition, this field research allows me to improve my dissertation's research question and hypotheses appropriate to my study context. During my dissertation research I need to better understand these factors to bridge conservation and development objectives necessary for human livelihoods and ecosystem health in the ROC by incorporating social responsibility.

This research would not have been possible without the active support of the Center for African studies and the Tropical Conservation and Development program of University of Florida, and the Wildlife Conservation Society. I enthusiastically appreciate the value of these institutions not only in funding my research, but in being a unique learning space for me.



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