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GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE
Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE)

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USAID's Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) focuses on mitigating the effects of global climate change by protecting the forest resources of Central Africa. Working with regional and local partners in nine Central African countries, CARPE is helping to preserve the region's vast carbon sinks with significant climate change benefits.

BACKGROUND

The Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) is a long term initiative by USAID to address deforestation and biodiversity loss in the Congo Basin of Central Africa. One of the least developed regions in the world, the Congo Basin holds massive expanses of closed canopy tropical forests that are second in area only to the Amazon Basin. Unsustainable natural resources extraction, shifting cultivation practices, poverty, and urban expansion at the forest margin, pose increasing threats to this globally significant forest resource. CARPE is implemented by a team of U.S. based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and U.S. government agencies, and works in collaboration with government agencies, regional, national and local partners in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and Sao Tome and Principe.

Maintaining the carbon "sink" potential of the region is a key objective of USAID's climate change program. CARPE's work is very important for addressing this key objective. With its vast forest reserves, Central Africa is the most important sub region of Africa for storing carbon and mitigating carbon dioxide emissions. The CARPE Forest Landscape Management Program aims to create and execute on the ground land use management plans coupled with a satellite imagery monitoring system, supported by full stakeholder participation and good governance tools. In doing so, CARPE identifies ways to limit deforestation and retain the forest as a significant global carbon sink.

SECTOR-SPECIFIC CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIVITIES

Since its inception in 1995, CARPE has facilitated dialogue between NGOs, timber companies, and national governments to improve overall forest protection. This activity encompasses data collection to inform forest landscape management, thereby empowering decision makers with transparent and up to date information. This effort has resulted in better forest management practices, a decrease in illegal logging, and a corporate wood sector reform initiative. CARPE has also supported studies to determine the effects climate change might have in the region, with a

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Cameroon: USAID has provided technical assistance through the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) to include the Baka Pygmy communities in the natural resource management process around Boumba Bek National Park in Cameroon. Through a participatory process, zones were mapped and Baka guides were trained to navigate and monitor the Park. Today, the park authorities and Baka communities are working together to set ground rules for access and user rights inside the park. Conflict around forest resources has decreased, improving the sustainable usage of the forest.

Gabon: Activities supported by the USAID/CARPE program strengthened the Government of Gabon's successful bid for World Heritage status for the Lopé-Okanda. CARPE has funded data collection and a draft management/monitoring plan for the Park, manifesting both its spectacular biodiversity and vulnerability to threats. The world heritage site will inevitably attract more international attention to foster conservation efforts.

Equitorial Guinea: Working with the government in Equatorial Guinea, USAID's partner, Conservation International, encouraged the President to issue an order to create a new national forest out of the expanse of land between Equatorial Guinea and the Gabon border. The President also issued a decree banning the export of raw logs to encourage local transformation, reduce resort unemployment, and reduce poverty in the country.

particular focus on the loss of the forest in the Congo Basin. Analyses show that without the forest, climatic patterns in the region would be severely altered and could lead to drought and major increases in temperature.

Program efforts to increase awareness of the significance of forest cover include a regional biennial report entitled "The State of the Forest." Significantly, this activity aims to collect and harmonize data collection and monitoring efforts, and to provide information to the public. Information helps improve governance, promotes scientific analyses, and improves capacity for local partners and governments in data collection methodologies. Trainings in visitor and park concession management help promote tourism and discourage forest degradation.

CARPE partners also focus their energies on community conservation within the forested landscape. Since 2004, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has hosted a Community Conservation Program in the Okapi Faunal Reserve which complements an existing land use planning process implemented in major nearby villages. Also in the DRC, an innovative project partners with local NGOs located in the Tayna Gorilla Reserve to create a post-secondary college level training program for conservation biology, with the expectation that communities will develop expertise to develop their forests for ecotourism and manage gorilla habitat in the region. Neighboring the reserve, in the village of Kasugho, the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI) has used an innovative approach that involves direct cooperation with local communities to implement a microhydro power plant project. The power plant has delivered light to the village of Kasugho transforming the lives of 16,000 people previously without access to electricity. The power plant now generates 35kVA, used for public lighting covering a distance of 1,500 meters. In the Republic of Congo, the government signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work with CARPE partners towards creating the Congo Wildlife Service, a parastatal structure responsible for managing the national protected area network.

Working with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), USAID provides satellite images and forest cover change maps of the region, to help study changes in forest cover and ground conditions which are difficult to detect on land. NASA just completed a decadal (1990-2000) baseline forest cover change for the entire Congo Basin. Additionally, the NASA consortium and the World Resources Institute (WRI) team is training a wide range of users in remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS), Global Positioning Systems (GPS), and mapping and data collection skills, to assist in the development of policy and planning. For example, WRI has developed a methodology using a combination of these satellite images, GIS and ground surveys, to generate an Internet based forest information system called a "Forest Atlas" to monitor logging operations. This information system allows national governments and independent observers to verify whether forestry concession holders are practicing legal and environmentally sustainable logging practices. Decision makers can

PARTNERS

USAID's partners in climate change activities in CARPE include:

- African Wildlife Foundation (AWF)
- Conservation International (CI)
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- Jane Goodall Institute (JGI)
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)
- Smithsonian Institute (SI)
- University of Maryland (UMD)
- US Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- US Forest Service (USFS)
- Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
- World Resources Institute (WRI)
- World Wildlife Foundation (WWF)

Because partners change as new activities arise, this list of partners is not comprehensive.

For more information, visit: http://carpe.umd.edu/

then devise appropriate policy interventions to protect forests under the greatest risk and preserve the valuable carbon sinks they represent.

CARPE supports the activities of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), which consists of 41 members including governments, intergovernmental organizations, international environmental associates, and business interests. The partnership supports a network of national parks, protected areas, and forestry concessions, and assists communities that depend upon the conservation of forest and wildlife resources. The partnership has advocated for improved environmental policies, and was responsible for creating a clause in the Congolese forestry code that allows communities to create "community forests," with rights to collectively manage land and associated wildlife and forests, so as to provide incentives for the community to invest in forestry preservation.

Forest landscape management plans are another tool to advance the conservation of Central African tropical forests and biodiversity. The US Forest Service is in various stages of producing 12 large-scale forest landscape management plans guides in three types of landscape use zones. The draft guide for Community Based Natural Resource Management is in circulation. These documents are essential to foster natural resources conservation in Central Africa to reduce the rate of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere in the Congo Basin.

As a result of these and the many other projects currently underway as part of the CARPE program, 45,000,000 hectares of terrestrial (mostly forest) and marine habitats of biological significance are under improved management, and the rate of biodiversity loss in these areas is being reduced.

USAID's support for CARPE has proved beneficial not only to the countries of Central Africa, but to the rest of the world as well. Preserving the vast carbon sinks of the countries in the Congo Basin is significantly mitigating the effects of climate change and protecting vital reservoirs of biodiversity.