



BUILDING A POST-HUNTING WILDLIFE ECONOMY IN THE DJA LANDSCAPE

In Cameroon's Dja Faunal Reserve, AWF provides support for protected-area management and development of new income-generating opportunities to replace unsustainable practices that exploit the forest.

INTRODUCTION

Located in southeastern Cameroon, the Dja Faunal Reserve is a critical rainforest ecosystem ranging over 526,000 hectares (1.3 million acres). It is part of the Congo Basin, which is known as the Earth's second lung for its carbon-sinking capacity. Unfortunately, this bastion of biodiversity faces several threats, including poaching, infrastructure development, logging, and hunting for bushmeat.

About 129,000 people live in 300 area communities that primarily rely on small-scale farming. AWF and partners implement a holistic conservation program that includes anti-poaching support, development of sustainable livelihoods, and facilitation of ecological surveys and monitoring to inform park management and land use. This work has been supported by the EU ECOFAC 6 program ("Preserving Biodiversity and Fragile Ecosystems in Central Africa").

OUR WORK

- **Building new income-generating opportunities:** AWF partners with communities to enhance incomes, food security, and sustainability through livelihood alternatives to bushmeat hunting, poaching, and unsustainable agriculture. We've provided training in improved cocoa farming, fish farming, sustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), and soap production using NTFPs such as mbalaka, njansa, and moabi. AWF also helped deepen community resilience by facilitating improved market access and pricing as well as providing logistical support (transportation, etc.) for villagers who harvest NTFPs and cocoa.
- **Supporting strategic anti-poaching:** AWF has strengthened the Reserve's anti-poaching capacity by providing rangers with needed equipment and training. Our Conservation Geography team helped park staff map poaching hotspots to inform their decision-making about where to deploy limited resources such as ranger patrols. We also established ranger bases at four priority sites in the Reserve and strategically placed camera traps and acoustic sensors to support wildlife monitoring and anti-poaching efforts.
- **Participatory conservation planning:** AWF brings together everyone who has a vested interest—including community members, government officials, and Indigenous peoples—to shape conservation strategy in the landscape. With AWF's technical guidance, the parties develop plans that prioritize not only wildlife protection in accordance with Cameroon law, but also area needs for livelihood training and development and other local priorities.

IMPACT

A July 2022 evaluation report described the impacts of the preceding five years of partnering with local governments and communities under the ECOFAC6 program.



PROFITABLE ALTERNATIVES TO POACHING

After training in microenterprise based on NTFPs, farmers are seeing greater yields, better product quality, and higher prices for their goods. The farmers' incomes increased by 78 percent, and poverty declined by 83 percent in the five-year period.

In 2021, 74 farmers participating in the sustainable livelihoods program produced more than 17,000 tons of cocoa, which they sold through market value chains AWF developed. One community member shared their story with AWF: "I was a poacher, but today if you come to my compound, you will actually see my cocoa farm. This is a visible change, because in the past I would have been in the forest for trapping and with my gun to [pay] for the school fees for my children."

CONSERVATION IN THE HANDS OF COMMUNITIES

New livelihoods are a win-win for communities and nature. Some community members used to travel to buy soap, but now they can produce their own—and create small businesses around their soap making skills. One community delegate shared the changes after AWF's training: "We have learnt and are able to do things we did not know before. We now make soap and oils from mbalaka, moabi, njansa and coconuts. We clean moabi well before we dry. They gave us batches, files, boats for free at the beginning to help in this."

HOLISTIC INTERVENTIONS WORK TOGETHER

Improved patrols across the landscape with increased geographical coverage keep the protected area more secure, and new livelihood activities replace the need to hunt. In fact, the hunting rate has dropped by more than half in Dja Faunal Reserve.

AWF IN DJA: BY THE NUMBERS

DJA IS HOME TO:

9,000	PLANT SPECIES	400	LARGE MAMMAL SPECIES
250	REPTILE SPECIES	200	AMPHIBIAN SPECIES
900	BIRD SPECIES	62	FISH SPECIES
1,500	INSECT & BUTTERFLY SPECIES		

78% INCREASE IN INCOME DUE TO ECONOMIC INTERVENTIONS

83% REDUCTION IN POVERTY DUE TO ECONOMIC INTERVENTIONS

71% AVERAGE INCREASE IN REVENUE FOR PARTICIPATING COCOA FARMERS

60% ESTIMATED REDUCTION IN POACHING AS OF 2022

360 FARMERS TRAINED IN COCOA-BASED AGRICULTURE



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