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Community Resettlement within the Context of Conservation and Development Projects:

Implications on Livelihood Chances Among Rural inhabitants of Ikondokondo village in South West Cameroon.

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Dedication

…..This work is dedicated to God almighty

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Abstract

In Cameroon the politics of forest resource governance stands asunder with the positive value of human activity within forest systems. This is partly due to the erroneous perception amongst policymakers and project planners that local peoples' involvement in forest systems can only be detrimental. Consequently, building on this simplistic view, Cameroon government's actions and forest conservation policies, until lately, tended to subscribe to a form of hyper-conservationism that required the complete exclusion of local peoples from so-called 'national parks' and 'conserved' forest systems. Increasingly, as emerging research continues to strongly indicate that forest growth and regeneration are to a considerable extent, linked to everyday human activity, and the direct environmental acumen of indigenous local peoples, the rational basis of exclusionary conservationism has come under serious scrutiny. Consequently, there is a growing consensus forming around the need to comprehensively interrogate the validity of the 'received wisdoms' that true forest conservation requires delinking human intervention from forest ecology.

Building extensively on a wealth of secondary and primary data, this study interrogates the processes that led to the establishment of Korup National Park in Southwestern Cameroon. It highlights the extent to which top-down conceptualization, planning and implementation of community resettlement initiatives in the Korup National Park have negatively affected the livelihood chances and socio-economic statuses of local forest dwellers in *Ikondokondo* area of Southwestern Cameroon. Through a poorly conceived and orchestrated resettlement scheme, the government of Cameroon set about forcefully dislocating local peoples and communities from their livelihood sources. The displaced indigenes of *Ikondokondo* depended entirely on forest for food, shelter, fuel and medicine, and the marketing of non-timber forest resources provided extra cash, which served as valuable 'economic cushions' against financial hardships. Yet, as primary data indicates, the forest served far more than a mere economic breadbasket. The Korup forest in its entirety served as a spiritual sanctuary of priceless anthropo-religious value at the heart of the *Ikondokondo* belief system, and local peoples strengthened forest conservation and regeneration by establishing strict culturally sanctioned regulations against deforestation. In fact, local peoples rebuilt the Korup forest and strengthened its flora diversity by planting fruit trees such as bush mango and pear, as well as cash crops such as cocoa and coffee. Consequently, the resettlement of local peoples within the context of the Korup project should be seen as a tragic process resulting in significant disruptions in a 'naturally negotiated' balance between conservation and human development.

This thesis argues for the need to revisit the orthodoxy of the received wisdom surrounding forest conservation in Cameroon. It submits that the agency led top-down approach to nature conservation actually harms than helps the forest ecosystem, alienates local peoples, and disrupts a delicately established balance between local human development and forest conservation and regeneration. The field data in the study corroborates a growing profile of research finding indicating that human activity strengthens than weakens forest ecosystems. The *Ikondokondo* people have much more to worry about than the loss of their homes and their ancestral systems. False compensation promises by government officials are yet to be met, basic amenities such as portable drinking water and health facilities are yet to be provided in the resettlement areas decades after their initial resettlement, and local peoples have completely lost faith in the government of Cameroon. Hence, in other for nature conservation programmes to be effective, there is urgent need to; strengthen commitment to put forest people at the centre of such policies, build effectively on the importance of local knowledge in forest resources management, and in the case of resettlement, establish fair and sufficient compensation mechanisms for resettled populations.

***Keywords*:** Community resettlement, Local people, Forest conservation, Livelihoods, Ikondokondo village, Cameroon.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1.0 Introduction

Cameroon still enjoys one of the highest forest coverage in Africa, and the country is site for numerous efforts at rain-forest conservation orchestrated principally by western conservation bodies and Non-governmental Organizations (Sharpe 1998). The need to protect biodiversity and to expand on timber trade (although quite contradictory in their own right) both appear as key priorities in a long list of prescriptions from the World Bank to the country (*cf* Sharpe 1998). Nevertheless, future prognoses on the existence of a wide spectrum of fauna and flora species is indeed gloomy, as the last 20 years have experienced a steady decline in many species that are already endangered and on the brink of extinction. For instance Ichikawa (2006) has estimated that between the years 1980 to 1995 as much as 2 million hectares of the forest area in Cameroon have disappeared, along with it, an inestimable wealth of flora and fauna species, mainly owing to logging operations conducted by national and multinational lumbering interests in the country. At its peak (1996 to 1998), lumbering cost Cameroon's environment an average of 1.7 million cubic meters of timber, worth USD 230 per annum (Ichikawa, 2006).

Unsurprisingly, Cameroon has since emerged the world's fourth largest supplier of timber after New Guinea, Gabon and Malaysia (Ichikawa, 2006). Effectively, Cameroon's timber exports accounted for as much as one-tenth of annual timber production worldwide (Bikie et al., 2000). In context, logging activities have grown progressively, accounting for close to 76% of the total forest area by 1999 standards, as compared to 8% in 1959. Thus, it is not unusual that the area designated for protection as reserves too have also shrunk drastically.

There is reasonable difficulty holding one single variable guilty for the accelerating pace of forest destruction in Cameroon. It perhaps warrant a much more closer inspection of the very many variables at the heart of the dwindling forest wealth in

the country to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the triggers at the heart of deforestation in Cameroon. In this vein, Ichikawa (2006) once again admonishes that we search for answers beyond the mere presence of logging operations. He proposes a multi-prong approach that takes equal weight of the contribution of broader macro and micro economic dynamics which all culminated in substantial pressures on the forest sector as cushion for economic distresses. Pursuant to this approach, the World Bank/IMF imposed Structural Adjustment Programmes –given the dismal reversals they inflicted on Cameroon's economic fortunes – constitute a critical juncture of significant import, and certainly, a logical place to start examining the underlying pressures that occasioned the long sorry decimation of the country's forest resources (Sunderlin et al., 2000).

As a reaction to faltering economic performances and structural deficiencies in the Cameroon economy, the World Bank rolled out in the late 1980s, a spate of draconian economic conditionalities – a sort of 'shock therapy' to kick-start the country's ailing economy in order to give it much needed debt servicing traction. This was by no means exclusive to the Cameroonian economy, as many other developing countries faced similar conditionalities. Under SAPs, Cameroon was compelled to dish out painful austerity measures that led to significant reversals in hard-earned development gains that the country had won since independence in the 1960s. The State for instance, summarily rolled back all social safety nets for the poor, imposed fees in the health and educational sector, and abdicated its role in social and infrastructural provisioning (Fonchingong, 1999). Between 1991 and 1992, the government embarked on the radical downsizing of the labour force, and in 1993 engaged in up to 70 % cut in salaries of workers who had survived redundancy (Ichikawa, 2006). Expectedly, unemployment rates skyrocketed from 7% in 1993 to 24% in 1994, and urban spaces became catchment areas for a demographic variety of deeply frustrated Cameroonians capable but unable to find work. The country consequently faced an urban poverty crisis. The attending difficulty in urban areas made urban-rural migration an attractive option, and the reverse exodus that ensued shifted population masses back to rural areas where they

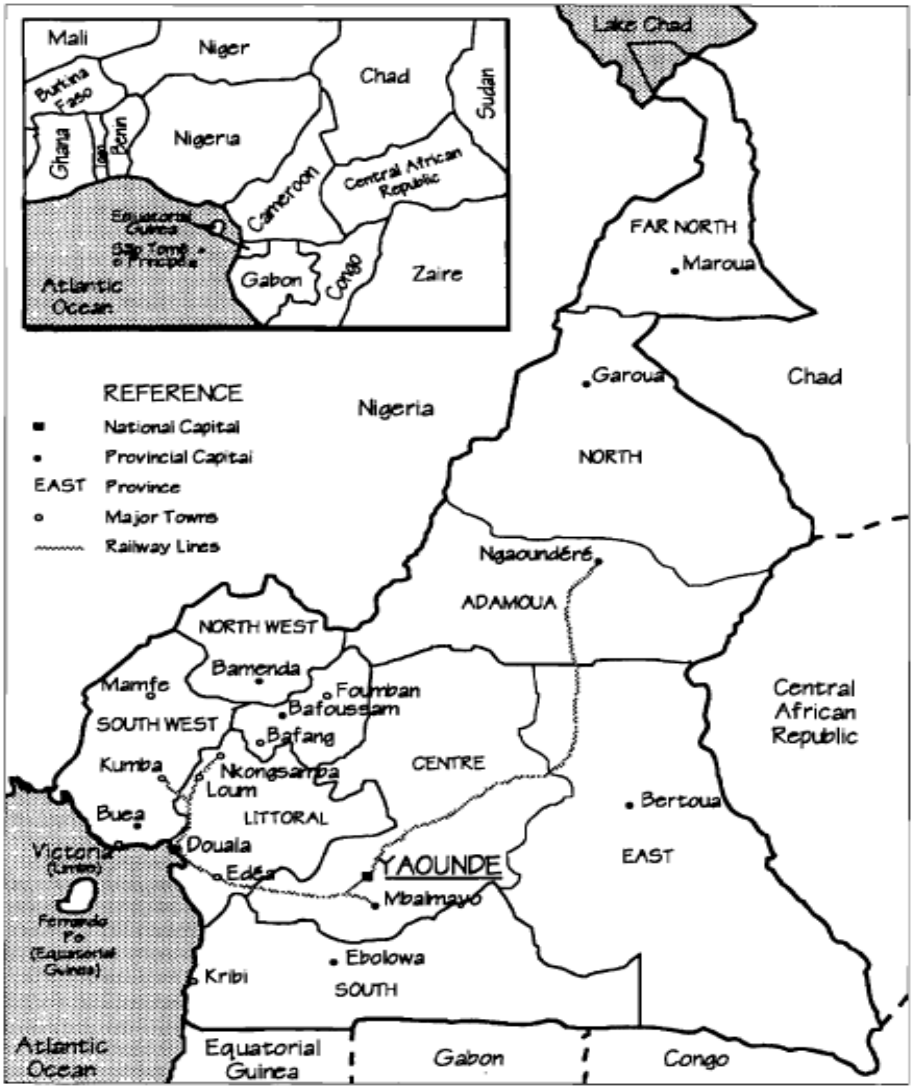
engaged in subsistence agriculture both for livelihood and for commerce (Ichikawa 2006). As rural spaces regained their significance, the scarcity of arable land increased as rural populations tend to encroach further into the forest environment, burning down forests to create spaces for farmland (Page et al., 2005). Research on Cameroon has shown for instance that within the five years period beginning from 1993, no single village experienced population outflows than inflows (Sunderlin et al., 2000 cited in Ichikawa 2006).

As a response to the increasing number of rural populations, local producers in some rural areas began shifting the nature of crop production from cash crops (such as coffee and cocoa which were already experiencing declining prices) to the production of more food crops for local consumption in order to satisfy the demands of geometric population influxes. Consequently, many farmers who embarked on more food crop production found a strong motivation to encroach further into more pristine forests to make room for cultivable farmlands, while maintaining their hold on previously owned cash crop land holdings. Supplementary to the resurgence of subsistence farming was the accompanying rise in artisanal hunting enterprises which put paid to the survival of endangered fauna species such as monkeys and chimpanzees, which were hunted indiscriminately. Wilkie and Carpenter (1999) for instance, have highlighted the dietary significance of bush meat consumption for local peoples within the entire Congo Basin, arguing that it remains the main source of animal protein for peoples and communities. In effect, local people consume on average, approximately 100 kg per day (Wilkie and Carpenter, 1999). Yet, Ichikawa (2006) paints a bleaker portrait of the situation confronting animal wildlife in Cameroon, where the plunder of endangered species took on a self-perpetuating character as a huge black market at the base of the Cameroonian micro economy. The commercialization of bush meat in Cameroon has since incentivized unscrupulous exploitation of precious fauna species, this coinciding with the equally dismal deforestation operations. Together, both forces make for a disturbing brew, invariably bound to push the country's environment perilously close to the brink. Lying aground below the above considerations are

environmental pressures precipitated in no small measure by a climate of enormous economic hardship ushered in by the austerity regimes of the Structural Adjustment conditionality. Understandably, SAPs qualify as the prime, if not the overwhelming analytical starting point for the wholesale environmental dislocations experienced by Cameroon in the course of the last three decades.

To salvage the growing precariousness of Cameroon's environment, both national and international actors tested at a wide variety of measures, within which a general consensus formed around the need for a conventional approach to rainforest conservation. For instance, conventionally, the question of rainforest destruction has been viewed primarily from the global perspective and out of concern for its adverse effect on the global atmosphere (namely, global warming), and the loss of biodiversity (or gene resources) (Ichikawa, 2006). Ichikawa (ibid) further contends that it is for this reason that rainforest destruction has been dubbed a 'global environmental problem'. It has been understood moreover, that a 'wildlife sanctuary' totally free from human activities must be created in order to safeguard the global commons. This idea has been particularly propagated by those from the west, especially in the advent of globalization. The world is neither homogenous, nor unified to such as extent as to warrant the perception of a global question as an issue of a local population. On the one hand, the whole idea of nature conservation is western driven. On the other hand, this idea appears outrageous for the simpleminded indigene more concerned about his next meal. The theory and practice of forest conservation hardly exacts any meaningful appeal. Consequently, it is nearly reflexive to expect serious protestations on the part of rural populations, to any plans to 'fence off forest resources beyond their daily reach'. Militant outbursts from indigenous people and local inhabitants thus seem justifiable given that the present day global environmental crisis can be traced back to the industrial civilization of the 'north' and colonial exploitation by the 'north', (Furukawa, 2001, quoted in Ichikawa 2006).

Fig 1. MAP OF CAMEROON



1.1 Social connections, natural linkages or confrontational Environmental Politics?

The history of forest conservation (by way of the creation of national parks) in Cameroon has always been a site of conflicts between the Government of Cameroon and affected local forest communities, (cf Ichikawa 2006). Sharpe has argued that the breakdown of relationships between local community people and forest resources tends to threaten livelihood chances of those forest communities affected, and represents the bedrock for conflict (Sharpe 1998). During German

colonial rule in Southwest Cameroon, indigenous people wore masks and destroyed effigies of German colonial officials in protest of land expropriation practices, and after harsh German retaliation, forest communities were forced to abandon their ancestral lands and to regroup themselves along more accessible paths (Sharpe 1998). Even after independence in the 1960s, such tendency to relocate community people continued and persisted with the intention to effect conservation projects. However, after the 1980s, international organizations dealing with conservation issues such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has remarkably emphasized that it is necessary for conservation programs to seek a balance between protecting forest species, and satisfying the needs of local residents. This suggestion reflects a generally acceptable conditionality that in order for forest conservation programmes to be successful certain pre-requisites have to be met. For instance, it emphasized the need for active participation on the part of local residents towards planning and implementation of projects; the need to design and implement a nature conservation programme in combination with a development programme; and most importantly, local inhabitants should be able to benefit from proceeds generated from conservation programmes. The Korup Park project in Cameroon was initiated in line with the above orientation, in what was known as an integrated conservation programme.

Furthermore, the Cameroon forestry law of 1981, later revised in 1994 clearly stipulates that local forest communities are allowed to practice ‘subsistence hunting’ with the use of ‘traditional methods’. These laws also created designated areas such as ‘community forests’ and ‘community hunting zones’ and also formulated legal rules specifying how forest resources of such areas could be used by local residents. Most importantly, these laws allowed local communities to be involved in community forest management (Government of Cameroon, 1994, cited in Ichikawa, 2006). Although the meanings of ‘traditional methods’ of hunting and subsistence hunting remain vague, such laws appear friendly in the eyes of onlookers. In reality, the practical implementation of conservation measures is in

complete opposition of the 1981 and 1994 laws on conservation. The stack reality is that indigenous forest communities are constantly been uprooted from living spaces, which define their life chances, and have served as the bedrock of their very survival.

1.2 Forest Conservation Policies: 'Squeezing-in' Livelihood patterns in South West Cameroon

Forest resources have a particularly pertinent utility for especially rural agrarian based communities around the world. Flora and fauna resources within pristine and secondary forest belts for instance, play crucial roles in sustaining dietary needs and economic livelihoods while at the same time, consolidating socio-cultural believe systems, institutions and practices. In Cameroon for instance, Peters et al (1989) as well as Arnold and Ruiz (1999) have since lend their voice in favour of the numerous benefits reaped by forest-based communities through the harvesting and utilization of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), timber resources, and fuel-wood. Feka et al (2009), Walters et al (2008) and Millennium Ecosystem Report (2005) further elucidate on the multifarious socio-anthropological significances reflected by Forests within the traditional, religious and cultural codices across many African societies. In short, in addition to the ecological and economic functions, forests play aesthetic, regulatory, cultural and religious functions, which can only be measured in "symbolic" terms. There is little doubt then, when human geographers such as Fonjong (2001) describe forests, at least within the context of African societies, as "the livewire of socio-cultural and economic survival".

Yet, gaining a richer and more encompassing understanding of the reasons for the global recourse to conservation of forests beginning in the 1980s, as well as the associated controversies these enunciated (Western and Wright 1994; Furze et al. 1996), perhaps require a careful exploration of such disturbing trends as the escalation of global warming, the physical decimation of forest resources in the Amazon and the Congo Basin, and the negative multipliers these have had on the wealth of flora and fauna species dependent on these forest for their livelihood. However, as biodiversity conservationism became fashionable (Malleson 2000;

Sayer 1986) with environmental advocacies like the WWF mounting campaigns focusing on the protection of forests (Malleson 2000), the early years of the 1990s brought renewed emphasis on "human communities" and criticism of the inordinate disregard of the need for human survival within conservationist agenda. The rise of sustainability and local ownership as guiding principles in the international agenda meant a serious re-visitation of forest conservation attempts, retooling strategies to mainstream the need for human exploration of forest resources as key to sustainable development. In short, as WWF/IUCN (1982; cited in Malleson, 2000) reiterated, the main argument was predicated on the thesis that 'conservation depends on development and development is impossible without conservation' (cited in Malleson 2000).

The high profiled Brundtland Commission Report (1987) brought added weight to the newfound nexus between conservation and development internationally, concluding that sustainable conservation could only occur if the basic needs of poor people are met by development, while at the same time, insisting that sustainable development could not be realized without the conservation of natural resources. Nearly three decades since this posit was espoused, global development policy and praxis have failed to negotiate a realistic balance that meets both developmental and conservationist needs. This stalemate has, for a part, been fostered by the highly complex relationships existing between local communities and the forest resources within their vicinities (Leach and Fairhead, 1998).

In Cameroon, these complexities surrounding people-forest interaction is often undermined. For instance during the 1980s, ecological surveys were conducted, and many areas were identified and delineated as 'protected areas'; others were carved out for the establishment of national parks. The Lobeke River which was designated as a national park in 2001 is an outcome of such surveys. Similarly, in 2005, many additional parks including the Boumab-bek and Nki national parks were also created. With respect to the South Western region of Cameroon, the Korup National Park was also established in 2002. By designating certain areas as

'protected areas', and then establishing national parks in Cameroon such as those in South West parts of the country, these conservation projects have generally peddled a set of regulations about the use of local forest resources which have been regarded at best, as being draconian in nature (Sharpe 1998). For instance, local communities are resettled out of 'protected areas, and are denied right of access into these forests, which for decades have been their source of livelihood. This has resulted in squeezing livelihoods patterns of some rural inhabitants especially those that rely solely on the forest and forest resources. Such restrictions directly contradict set-down forestry laws in Cameroon, which permit local inhabitants to enter the forest and to harvest forest resources for their immediate consumption especially non-timber forest products, wild honey and medicinal plants (WWF -Cameroon, 2001). As a consequence of the squeeze in livelihood chances of people who depend on forest resources, fiery criticisms have been levied against such conservation policies.

1.3 Cameroon's Forest Resources: Between Conservationism and Development

There is growing recognition by scholars that 'natural environments' are often shaped by man (Malleson 2000; Leach and Fairhead 1998). Ichikawa (2006) for instance, argues that although indigenous peoples of Southwest Cameroon for decades have been living with the forests and depending on it for food, shelter, traditional medicine, water, fuel, as well as beliefs; they have also been very instrumental in re-building the forest through the planting of fruit tress like 'bush mango', pear, cocoa, and coffee (Ichikawa 2006). In the same vein, Richards (1973), a leading botanist in the 20th century has commented that "Even in the depth of the so-called primary forest there is often evidence of former human occupation". This human-nature interaction is further explored in the works of Dounais (1993) among the Mvae, in Cameroon, which reveals that highly forested areas tended to be past areas of extensive human cultivation, which benefited from impressive human management.

The daunting reality in Cameroon however is that, the politics of forest resource governance stands asunder with the positive value of human activity within forest systems. Consequently, the government's actions, and policy, until lately, focused on the rather extremist alignment of forest conservation requiring complete human abdication from so-called conserved forests (Ichikawa 2006). The popularity of this policy slant towards the de-linking of people from forest resources in Cameroon should partly be seen as an extension of the widespread pressures and lobbying from powerful pro-conservationists like the WWF. The core value of this approach rests on the rather simplistic yet overwhelmingly attractive premise that keeping people out is a panacea to environmental degradation and the destruction of forest resources. Sharpe (1998b) finds serious cracks in the theoretical and philosophical foundations of such policy, arguing that causing fractures between society and forest not only forms the basis of conflict, but also seriously undermines livelihood chances among rural populations.

In Cameroon, Sharp's dissent has found practical realization. The Korup project in an attempt to establish the Korup National Park in Ndian Division typically began from what Leach and Fairhead (2000) have called 'received wisdoms'. The approach adopted by the project clearly demarcated territories void of any human encroachment. This was accompanied by the displacement of the people of Ikondokondo village who happen to find themselves in the delineated areas reserved for conservation of plants and animal species. With the associated dislocation of livelihood sources and socio-cultural connections of populations involved, it has since been overwhelmingly clear that the ideally crucial balance between conservation and development was far from being met in this instance (Ichikawa 2006). What simply resulted was the inhumane, intrusion into the socio-cultural spaces of community, as ancestral shrines were destroyed alongside other symbols of priceless socio-anthropological value (Ichikawa 2006). At the heart of this research is a critical interrogation of the community relocation exercises conducted in the village of Ikondokondo in Southwestern Cameroon, in the context of conservation and development projects. Investigating the implications these have

had on the livelihood chances on the populations of the forest communities concerned is at the heart of this enquiry.

1.4 Statement of Research Problem

Development intervention in the form of community resettlement is common in Cameroon. Literature on this tendency is quite extant in development studies, with various ascriptions such as 'foreignization of space' (Zoomers, 2010), 'green grabbing' (Fairhead et al., 2012), and 'land grabbing' (Boamah, 2012; Alonso-Fradejas, 2012; Prosper et al., 2011) referring to the same trend. This type of approach to conservation and development is often perceived as 'top-down', and consequently fails to take into consideration the everyday realities of the local people concerned and their ways of life (Ichikawa 2006; see also Sharpe 1998b). The failure to widely consult local peoples and the rather aggressive relocation of individuals and communities from their ancestral land violates all known precepts of fairness, justice, inclusivity and development. Such top-down approaches are often accompanied with 'blue-print' procedures in policies. That is, preconceived knowledge is forced on local people regardless of what they think or what they do. Policy makers expect that local peoples should receive and accepts such knowledge to the fullest. Such approaches to policy designation and implementation have been heavily challenged in what Leach and Fairhead (2000) called received wisdoms' urging the need for its revision. Consequently, in Cameroon like elsewhere, these have attracted both widespread criticism from without and resistance from the populations concerned (Arrey 2008; Sharpe 1998a; see also Fairhead and Leach 1996). Serious problems with accountability, lack of transparency, bad governance and normalized corruption in Cameroon meant that even compensation mechanisms put in place to address the grievances of relocated communities and build their capacities for adaptation and resilience in new areas are often inept and fraught with inadequacies (Sharpe 1998b).

But to understand the real depth of problems associated with population relocation requires a layer-by-layer sieve through the strata of challenges that relocated

communities face in their new areas of settlement. As Richard (1992), and to a considerable extent (Burnham 2000) have indicated that resettled local communities are continuously confronted with series of challenges such as food insecurity due to limited agricultural lands, falling incomes owing to fall in productivity; inadequate access to markets; and lack of basic services like health, education, and pipe borne water. Implicitly, such challenges point to the failure by planners involved in community relocation to understand and factor-in the relationship between the 'social futures and the forest futures', as conceived by local people (Sharpe 1998b; see also Gengenbach 1998; Agrawal & Gibson 1999; Leach et al 1999). Hence, for conservation projects to be effective, policies or actions must include the possibility of conserving fauna and flora by allocating forest lands to villages or communities as traditional and sacred land which as in many cultures, have been sustainably managed from generation to generation (Sharpe 1998a).

This study focuses on the processes involving the establishment Korup National Park in Southwestern Cameroon. The main goal of the Korup project was to combine the conservation and protection of the Korup forest ecosystem with the economic and social developments of the villages in and around the forest areas. In other words, Malleson has clearly remarked that one of the project's main aims was to attempt to link-up conservation with sustainable development (Malleson, 2000). Underlying the project's objective were the ideas that the ever-increasing local population and their dependence on natural resources in and around the reserves were causing irreversible destruction of the forest environment. Similarly, the project assumed that local farmers were ignorant of sound ecological principles that lay behind farming practices in the rain forest environment (Gartlan 1984: 90). In actuality, this assumption was false because local populations of Ikondokondo played instrumental roles in planting fruit trees; engaged in food and cash crop cultivation and also safeguard the forest against bush fires. All these locally inspired agro-ecological efforts were undermined by conservation authorities. These officials held very strong the idea that forest people of Ikondokondo, like

other forest communities have been very destructive to the growth and regeneration of the forest.

Consequently, it was argued by the project that effective conservation of plants and animal species can only be attained through community relocation of local forest inhabitants living in and around forest reserves. The Korup project holds that through conservation, local inhabitants will benefit enormously from job opportunities such as game guards as well as in the catering and hotel sectors via the development of tourism.

Unfortunately, the data collected from the field indicates the contrary and critically interrogates the inadequacies of such 'received wisdoms' (as used by Leach and Fairhead, 2000). As a reaction to such 'incorrect wisdoms' Arrey (2008) has pointedly argued that, the Korup relocation experiment on the people of Ikondokondo village represents one of the worst recorded scenarios of population relocations in Cameroon for the multiplicity of inadequacies involved, ranging from failed planning to marginalization of local peoples' customs and ways of life, to the downright failure to anticipate challenges in drafting new resettlement sites for inhabitants of the village Ikondokondo. The Korup project subjected over 350 villagers to serious strains on their livelihoods, and ways of life, pushed many more to the brink, and dislocated valuable socio-cultural systems from their sources of origin, which were the Korup forests. Furthermore, as Sharpe (1998a) has observed, the inherent conflicts that have developed between these local community people and the development agencies/state officials over rights of access to, and control over forests and forest resources in the Korup area, is hinged on the dismal failures associated with the Korup forest conservation attempt. Unfortunately, few studies have been designed to attend to the Korup population relocation issue broadly, while undertaking an examination of the relationships between rural livelihood strategies of the people of Ikondokondo and associated forest resources in the area specifically. *Part of the task of this research is to show how these wisdoms are incorrect and needs revision.*

1.5 Aim of Study

This study consequently examines the extent to which top-down conceptualization, planning and implementation of community resettlement initiatives in the Korup forest area have negatively affected the livelihood chances and socio-economic status of local forest dwellers in Ikondokondo, South western Cameroon.

1.6 Objective of study

The main objective of this study is to examine the inadequacies of conservation inspired approach(es) to development, which takes the form of community relocation, and the implications of this, on the survival chances of resettled rural inhabitants around the Korup National Park (KNP) of Cameroon.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- examine the motivations for the relocation of Ikondokondo village from the Korup forest area
- investigate the implications of resettlement on livelihood chances
- identify adaptation mechanisms put in place to enhance community resilience and adaptation
- Generate recommendations going forward to balance conservation with development imperatives

1.7 Key Research questions:

The specific research questions addressed in this study are:

- What motivations existed for the relocation of communities around the Korup forest area?
- How do the local community people of Ikondokondo manage livelihood and survival challenges economically and socio-culturally in the face of restricted access to forest resources?

- How have these people adapted, what factors account for their resilience thus far?

- What recommendations can be put in place to balance conservation with development imperatives?

1.8 Research delimitations

As mentioned above, although there have been displacement of many forest communities in different parts of Cameroon, the focus of this research is on displaced local community people of Ikondokondo village in Mundemba sub division. My choice for these communities is because it is among those displaced communities with the most severe livelihood repercussions occasioned by development projects. Another striking reason for this choice is that the people of Ikondokondo were not sufficiently informed and provided with enough information on their displacement. Even more, these local inhabitants prior to resettlement were promised compensation packages which were far below their expectations. Hence it is obvious that in the advent of their relocation, they encountered severe challenges which greatly affected their livelihood options (Röschenthaler 2000). Interviews and focus group discussions were used to elicit data to understand the entire resettlement process, as well as the impacts of such a scheme on livelihood chances amongst the people of Ikondokondo village of South west Cameroon.

1.9 Significance of proposed research

This study is quite relevant. First, Cameroon's viability as 'bread basket' of Central African region continues to be seriously undermined by failing agricultural yields. By interrogating the plethoric ways in which rural livelihood options are compromised by development projects, this research represents a timely academic contribution to an area, which begs for urgent research attention, yet unfortunately receives little. Second, the study aims to devise evidence-based strategies needed to foster conservation, while at the same time ensuring that the benefits of natural resources are enjoyed by those at the grassroots. The findings of this study are relevant to the Korup Project, but much more to the wider current debate about

socio-political and economic dimensions of forest conservation and the linkages between conservation and development.

1.10 Structural Outline of Thesis

Structurally, this thesis is divided in to five chapters:

- Chapter I (already achieved) introduces the thesis. This chapter also undertakes reviews on related literature on the nature of forest management policies in Cameroon. It explores reasons explaining the rate of deforestation in Cameroon; it also delves into the macro and micro factors accounting for the continuous loss of forest resources in Cameroon. The chapter also does an investigation of the nexus between conservation and development and the different arguments put forward by conservation agencies like the World Bank. At the end of the chapter, the review problematizes the Korup project and interrogates the impact that it has created on livelihood chances of the people of Ikondokondo village in Southwestern Cameroon. The problematic nature of such an approach to forest conservation and development projects constitute the basis of this research.

- Chapter II: This is a historical chapter. It does a revisitation of the Cameroon forest policies and explains the processes of community resettlement under the 'Korup Project'. It undertakes an historical evolution and processes in context (politico-economic, institutional and legislative processes in Cameroon).

- Chapter III: focuses on research and methodological considerations. It explores the area of study, the study design. It also discusses the sources of data, approaches to data analysis, as well as more practical questions related

to research ethics, safeguarding subjectivity and community entry strategies. It also explains the limitation of the study.

- Chapter IV: This section of the thesis is preoccupied with the presentation and discussion of key trends emerging from field data. The chapter explores the contrasting positions between people-forest relations; drivers in community resettlement and justification in support of resettlement; It also explores local agro-ecological management practices undertaken by community people prior to resettlement and how these practices were altered as a result of their relocation. It also explores the livelihood challenges after resettlement and coping strategies put in place by local people. The chapter concludes with an analysis of Halfacree's (2007) theoretical 'threefold model', to understand how the project was conceptualize, and the implication it has on livelihood chances of local populations.

- Chapter V: then dwells on the last segment of the work, and basically made some concluding statements regarding the ineffectiveness of top-down approaches to conservation and development policies. The chapter also proposes the dire need to revise what Leach and Fairhead have called 'received wisdoms'. It concludes by searching for path-ways towards a people-centred approach to forest conservation and development. And also generates some recommendations to serve as caution when devising subsequent resettlement programmes.

CHAPTER TWO

Community Resettlement Processes under the 'Korup Project'.

2.0 Introduction

Cameroon is situated on the boundary between West and Central Africa (see map above). The country has a relatively well developed system of forest and faunal reserves, most of which were established in the colonial era during the 1930s and 1940s (Schmidt-Soltau 1999; see also Malleson 2000). Historically, most of Cameroon's national parks have been established in the more accessible savanna zone, in the north of the country. It is only in the last few decades, with the growing interest in biodiversity conservation and concern over deforestation that more attention has been paid by 'northern' conservationists and West African states to the conservation of tropical rainforests (Malleson 2000). Consequently, during the 1970s and 1980s many forest reserves in the humid forest zones of West Africa were given the status of 'protected areas' (Besong & Wencélius 1991: 15; Martin 1991: 209). This change in status was followed by the establishment of a number of internationally funded conservation projects, set up to assist African governments to manage protected areas. This study was carried out in Mundemba Sub-Division, part of Ndian Division, Southwest Province (see map below). This forest area habours one of the most substantial areas of rainforest reserves in the southwestern part of the country. It is in this same area that the Korup National Park is located - the only national park located in the humid forest zone of Cameroon. Gartlan's (1984: 18) research has revealed that the Korup National Park (KNP) is one of the oldest rainforests in Africa. Similarly, interest from international forest conservationists has focused on this region because it is one of the most species-rich in Africa, characterized by high levels of endemism (Gartlan 1984: 16; Martin 1991: 39).

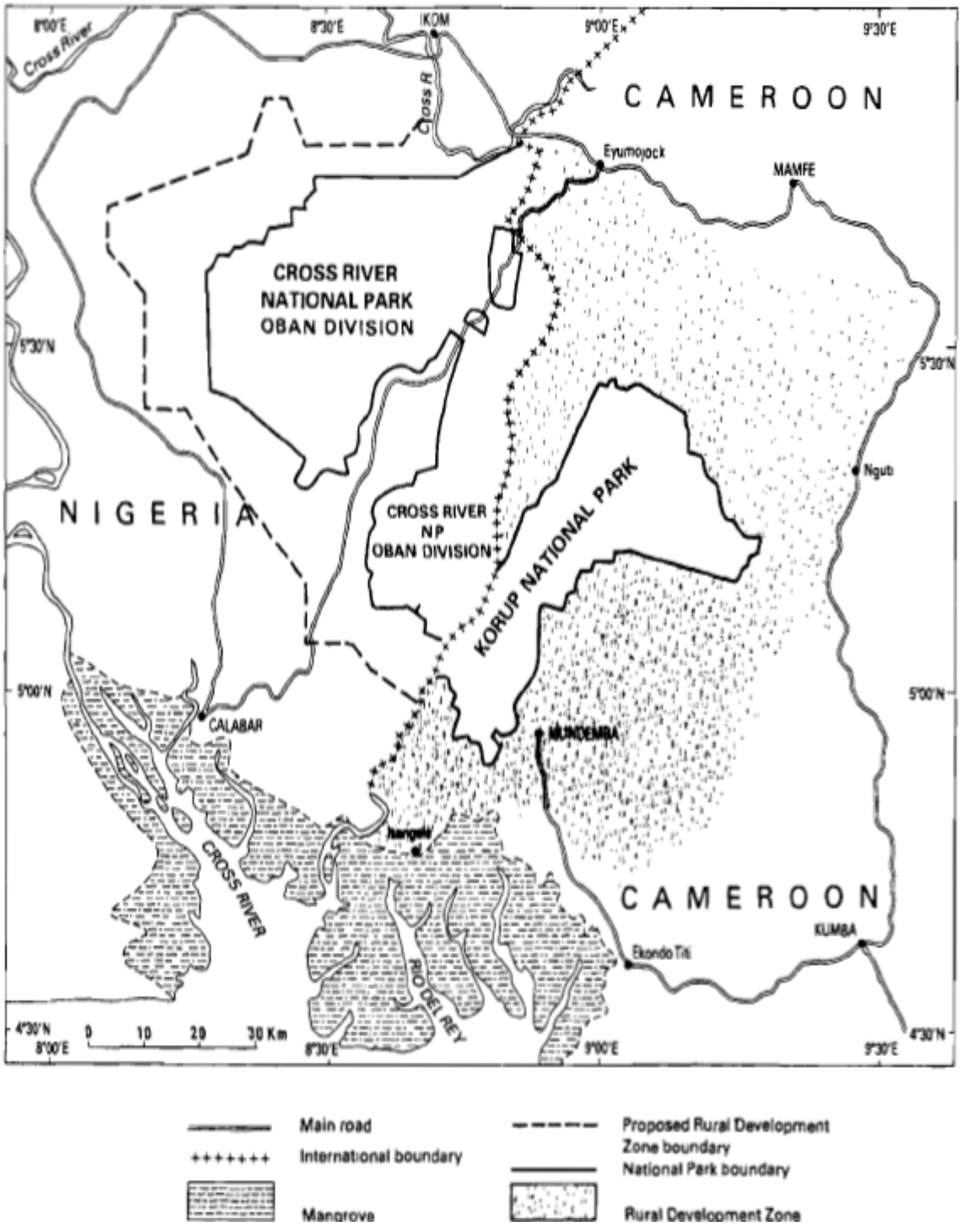
A significant portion of the forest covered by the Korup National Park was originally, reserve established in 1937 under British colonial rule (Röschenthaler 2000). The high diversity of the Korup Forest Reserve attracted the interest of a

group of expatriate researchers studying soils, primates and botany in the early 1970s. After negotiations with international agencies, the Korup Forest Reserve was made a national park in October 1986, by Government Decree No. 86/123. The gazettement of the Korup National Park (KNP) marked the start of the flow of major funding for the Korup Project (KP) and studies by expatriate consultants in the fields of soils, forestry, agro-forestry and socio-economics. In August 1987 an agreement between the Cameroon Government and WWF was signed to provide technical assistance for the development of a management plan for the creation of Korup National Park and the socio-economic development of the surrounding areas. The planning and implementation period was expected to last for five years, with a budget of over 3.7 million pounds (Ruitenbeek 1990: 27).

At the heart of the Korup project was the issue of community relocation. This idea to relocate villages living within and around the proposed national park was first echoed in public in December 1981. The Senior Divisional Officer of Ndian Division addressed a letter to the chiefs of these villages informing them that their resettlement was imminent and inevitable (Devitt 1988). The people of these villages, especially those of Ikondokondo village were promised by the Korup project that resettlement would offer them better amenities and opportunities than those currently available. The project also promised that the establishment of the park would attract development to the area and many jobs would be created (Devitt 1988, 40, quoted in Schmidt-Soltan 1999)

Fig. 2 Map of Southwest Region

Fig. 3 Map of Korup National Park (Cameroon) and Cross River National Park (Nigeria)



2.1 The Korup Project and Resettlement: Historical evolution and Processes in Context

The History of the Korup Project cuts across three phases. The first phase (1970-1986) of the project focuses on how it was conceived and designed. This phase embraces activities like baseline surveys, contacts with potential sponsors and writing of proposals. This phase also presented outlines on how to implement the project. Phase two (1986-1988) marked the beginning of the gazettement of the Korup National Park, and the financing of the project by donors like ODA, now DFID, and WWF. Phase three (1989-1994) involved the drawing up of a new plan which proposed considerable expansion of the project, both spatially and in terms of the scope of development activities. The following paragraphs describes each of these phases. These phases are reviewed in light of the economic, political, institutional and legislative context in which the project took place. More detailed analysis of these phases are presented in Malleson (2000)

2.1.1 Phase One (1970-1986): Politico-economic, Institutional and Legal Processes in Cameroon

Before the 1980s, the government of Cameroon's interest in forest focused mainly on timber exploitation (Malleson 2000). Cameroon was ranked 3rd as Africa's largest supplier of timber after the Ivory Coast and Gabon (Gartlan 1984: 33). During this period, the government of Cameroon exercised very little concern over issues on environmental protection (*cf* Malleson 2000). This is justified by the fact that the country could provide no official document in support of conservation programmes at the national level. However, during the early 1980s, the government of Cameroon began to focus its attention towards issues of conservation. This is explained partly as a result of the influence and presence of international biodiversity conservation agencies. For example, Decree No. 81-13 of 1981 stipulated clearly that 20% of the country should be given total protection in national parks or equivalent reserves. Malleson (2000) had noted that during this period some national parks existed in the savanna zone of north Cameroon, but

none were located in the rainforest zone of the south. Following chapter 1, article 3 of Decree No. 83/170, humans were not prohibited from living within national parks, although the same decree prohibited the following activities from taking place within national parks: fishing, hunting, pollution of waters, industrial activities, extraction of materials, forestry, agricultural, or pastoral or activities, and domestication of animals. Article 7 of Ordinance 74-2, of 1974 posits:

> *‘ bona fide owners and occupants who hold rights previous to the entry into force of the present Ordinance over public property of the state ... may not be dispossessed thereof unless the public interest so requires and subject to compensation calculated as in the case of expropriation’ (cited in Malleson 2000).*

Thus, unless it has been decided that public interest requires the resettlement of the inhabitants of a park may be presumed that inhabitants of villages inside a park may legally resides there, even though their livelihoods has been constricted.

2.1.1.1 Project Conceptualization, processes and proposed plans under Phase 1

The idea of creating KNP was conceived in the early 1970s by Steve Gartlan and Thomas Struhsaker who were both studying forest primates in southwest Cameroon at the time. Gartlan's main area of research, at that time, was the Douala - Edea Forest Reserve. Struhsaker and Gartlan visited KFR for the first time in 1970. They were drawn to this area because Struhsaker had been told that the rare Preuss's red colobus monkey was present in the reserve (Oates 1999: 139). Both Gartlan and Struhsaker saw red colobus in the KFR and both agreed that Korup deserved greater attention. These researchers made a proposal to the Cameroon Government to make Korup and Douala - Edea Forest Reserves national parks, but the Cameroon government gave no immediate reaction to their proposal (Oates 1999: 139). In 1977, Gartlan met Phil Agland, an ardent conservationist who had spent several years travelling the tropics looking at attempts to conserve rainforests. Agland was concerned that the past failures of rainforest conservation were mainly due to lack of public interest. Agland started his own research in Cameroon with Gartlan at his research camp at Douala - Edea Forest Reserve (FR), but their research there was abandoned when oil companies were given oil prospecting licenses in the area. In 1978, Gartlan set up a research camp in the Korup Forest

Reserve (KFR) and Agland followed (Oates 1999: 140). Agland spent the next five years making a film about the Korup forest. By 1980, the KFR had been adopted as an official project of IUCN and WWF. Agland and Gartlan drew up a proposal to create three rainforest national parks in Cameroon: Korup, Dja (in southern Cameroon) and Pangar-Djerem (in central Cameroon) (Gartlan & Agland 1981). This proposal was presented to the Cameroon Government in 1981. It emphasized the importance of an integrated conservation and development approach, which had by that time become the formal policy of WWF. The proposal was accepted in principle by the Cameroon Government and a decision was made to start with Korup.

In 1982, Agland, Gartlan including a host of several other committed biodiversity conservationists set up a charity in the UK called Earthlife; with the intention to generate funds for the establishment of rainforest national parks (Malleson 2000). Agland's award-winning film called 'Korup - An African Rainforest' was broadcast in Britain by Channel Four in 1982 (Malleson 2000). The film generated much public interest and spearheaded Earthlife's fund-raising campaign. The directors of Earthlife founded a subsidiary company called Bioresources Ltd. in1984, which became the 'operating arm' of Earthlife.

Following the impact of the film, WWF International commissioned Gartland to write a management plan for the creation of KNP and the development of the areas surrounding it. Gartlan's (1984) 'Korup Regional Management Plan' was one of the first attempts to use the concept of linking conservation with sustainable development to draw up plans for an 'integrated conservation and development' field project (Malleson 2000). The main goal of the project was to combine 'the conservation and protection of the Korup forest ecosystem with the economic and social development of Ndian Division' (Gartlan 1984: 91). Gartlan (1984) identified a number of key land and resource use problems in the Korup Forest Reserve (KFR), based on the assumption that the ever-expanding local population and their engagements in the utilization of natural resources in and around the reserves were

causing irreversible destruction of the forest environment. Firstly, Gartlan assumed that agricultural production was largely limited to subsistence production because of low soil fertility and because farmers were ignorant of the ecological principles that lay behind sound farming practices in the rainforest environment (Gartlan 1984: 90). Secondly, he also claimed that people in the Korup forest relied heavily on bush-meat as their primary source of animal protein and that this was leading to the rapid depletion of wildlife in the KFR (Gartlan 1984: 71). Furthermore, he argued that the main reason for forest-dwellers' over-dependence on bush-meat was because other sources of animal protein, particularly domestic livestock, were limited (Gartlan 1984: 114). Livestock disease was seen to be one of the main constraints to increased livestock production in the Korup forest. Thirdly, according to Gartlan's observation, malnutrition was assumed to be a problem in the Korup forest largely because of limited production in agriculture, coupled with ignorance on more effective and efficient systems of crop and animal production (Gartlan 1984: 54).

Consequently, Gartlan believed that the Korup conservation and development project would bring direct benefits to local people through such initiatives as the development of plant pharmaceuticals (Gartlan 1984:113) and tourism (Gartlan 1984: 88). He argued that ethno-botanical research on the rich diversity of plants in the Korup forest would reveal a range of plant compounds which could be used as medical cures and would generate income for local people. He also claimed that the establishment of the Korup National Park would create employment opportunities for game guards as well as in the catering and hotel sector through the development of tourism (Gartlan 1984: 91). The assumptions discussed above provided the basis for the Korup Project's approach and implementation plans (Malleson 2000). The basic tenets of the project were summarised as follows: The long term conservation of the planned KNP would only be achieved through the cooperation and support of local people (Malleson 2000). This would only be possible if living standards of the people were improved and tangible benefits created which are directly linked with

the conservation of the park (Devitt 1988b: 3). Another underlying tenet of the Korup Project was that the successful conservation of KNP would only be achieved by eliminating the land-use conflicts within the park. It was assumed that this, in turn, could only be achieved through the resettlement of villages inside the park, and within the immediate vicinity of it, to areas outside it (Gartlan 1984: 111). The main reason given by project planners for the need for resettlement was that once the park was created, most of the economic activities of the people living within the park would be prohibited by law (Malleson 2000).

Resettlement was also justified on grounds that, if the villages inside the park remained where they were, economic development would be constrained largely by the physical limitations of poor soils and geographical remoteness. It was argued that through resettlement, social and economic conditions in the areas further away from the proposed park area would be improved through the construction of roads, public amenities, agricultural interventions and the development of tourism and plant pharmaceuticals (Gartlan 1984). Thus it was argued that resettlement of villages away from designated park areas would then enable the inhabitants of these villages to benefit from the project's planned 'development' initiatives. Thus, the idea of resettling these villages in areas outside the park and assisting them to improve their socio-economic status became a key factor in the project's rural development component.

Malleson (2000) contends that one of the main development strategies proposed was to create 'development zones' or 'buffer zones' in the areas surrounding the park in which a range of conservation and development activities would be implemented to protect the proposed park and to increase the living standards of the inhabitants of the villages who, it was proposed, would be resettled there. The establishment of an 'agro-forestry scheme' aimed at overcoming the supposed problem of destructive and 'unsustainable' farming practices was a key component of this strategy

(Malleson 2000). However, precisely what agro-forestry interventions would be initiated was not clear, as the following statements by project planners indicated:

> *It is essential that when the forest is cleared for agriculture that it be immediately replanted with an agroforestry scheme, otherwise there is a serious risk of massive soil erosion. It is anticipated that an agroforestry scheme can be designed that will allow as many as possible of the existing trees to remain in situ (Gartlan 1984: 90). Based on the information received, a totally integrated agroforestry scheme including trees and shrubs, food and cash crops and animals can be planned (Wicks et al 1986: quoted in Malleson 2000).*

Access to the area surrounding the planned park, where it was proposed that inhabitants of park settlements should be relocated, was restricted by lack of roads. It was assumed that road construction, along with the project's 'agro-forestry scheme' and alternative income-generating activities, would transform the economy of the area from subsistence agricultural production to an agricultural export economy. Government plans already existed to fund the construction of two major roads into the areas surrounding the park.

2.1.1.2 Korup Project Activities under Phase 1

From 1979-1986, forest conservationists carried out surveys and research to develop funding and implementation proposals for the establishment of the KNP. In the absence of any formal plan and prior to the gazettement of the park, project planners went ahead with discussions on the creation of the Korup National Park with local government officials and inhabitants of settlements within and surrounding the park (Malleson 2000). In March 1981 John Parrot, (the conservation officer for the 'Cameroon Forest Park Conservation Education Programme) carried out the first survey of villages inside the Korup Forest Area (KFA). During this survey, information was collected on the village populations and occupations. Plans for the creation of KNP were discussed with the communities visited and so was the issue of resettlement. According to the report, 'on the whole, the response was encouraging and ... after discussion, many villagers welcomed the greater protection that would be afforded their forest by the creation of a National Park' (Parrott 1981a; Malleson 2000). When Parrott visited the ecologically rich '*mboke* area in the northeast of the area, he recommended that the

boundaries of Korup be extended, adding an extra 24,000ha (25%) to the proposed park area. This extension incorporated two new settlements- Ikenge and Bareka Batanga. It was again assumed that these two new villages will be resettled alongside Bera, Esukutan and Erat. A small extension to the east of the Korup Forest Reserve (KFR), which included the settlement of Ekundu Kundu (sometimes spelled as Ikondokondo), was also proposed by project planners. As a result of this new extension, it was proposed that Ikondokondo should also be resettled.

In December 1981, a letter addressed to the 'Chief and Population' of Bera, Esukutan, lkenge and Bareka Batanga, was sent out by the Senior Divisional Officer, Ndian informing them that their 'villages fall within the proposed Korup National Park and it is envisaged that you be moved for resettlement elsewhere so that you can enjoy better facilities in the future' (Malleson 2000). The villages of Erat and Ekundu Kundu appear not to have been sent any similar correspondence (Malleson ibid). At the end of January 1982, a public notice was released by the General Delegate of Tourism, Yaoundé informing the public of a project for the creation of Korup National Park and describing its boundaries, which included the extension to the existing Korup Forest Reserve, proposed by Parrott and Gartlan. In 1982, project planners held a series of meetings with government officials in Mundemba and representatives of the villages that lay within and around the proposed national park, which raised hopes that the park would bring substantial improvements to the area (Malleson 2000). Officials also stressed in some of these meetings that resettlement was ‘inevitable and imminent’ (Malleson ibid). In June 1982, the Senior Divisional Officer then informed the chiefs and people of Bera, Esukutan, Ikenge and Bareka Batanga that they could relocate during the following rainy season or dry season (Röschenthaler 2000). Attempts were then made by project planners to assess the value of buildings and perennial crops owned by the inhabitants of villages within the proposed park boundaries. In January and February 1983, an official evaluation commission, consisting of representatives of the government administration, concerned government services and forces of law

and order, was established to carry out another assessment of settlements that the project proposed should be resettled.

Houses were evaluated by the commission according to whether they were 'semi-permanent'(wattle and daub houses with zinc roof) or 'temporary' (wattle and daub houses with thatched roof). Perennial crops were also assessed. These included coffee, cocoa, oil palm, coconut, raffia, citrus, mango, avocado, plum *(Dacryodes edulis),* kola, calabash and breadfruit trees, based on Ministry of Agriculture guidelines (Malleson 2000). Malleson's ethnographic research further highlighted that no assessments, were made of 'wild' trees of economic value, such as *'njabe''bush mango', 'njansang'* or of timber trees growing within the village territory, as these 'wild' species are not covered by relevant Cameroonian laws (Malleson 2000). Some of the villages like Erat, Ekoneman Ojong, and Akwa rejected the assessment conducted, disputing that such assessments have been conducted by persons who are largely unfamiliar with their socio-economic and cultural realities. Hence the results presented are considered null and void as far as they are concerned. Some of these villages to be resettled even refused the possibility for a second assessment in spite of the positive promises attached to the project's package (Malleson 2000).

Following the official assessment of compensation for the relocation of twelve settlements in and around the proposed park, the evaluation commission compiled a dossier for the amount officially estimated to be needed for compensation, using figures from the first assessment made by Parrott for Erat and estimates for the settlements of Ekoneman Ojong and Akwa. This amounted to a total of 282,332,930 CFA, which at the exchange rate at that time was roughly equivalent to 564,665 pounds. The dossier was submitted, first, in the Delegation of Tourism's budget for 1984-85 but was not approved. It was then submitted to the Presidency but was rejected on the basis that there was no provision for compensation and no suggested alternatives to resettlement (Gartlan 1984: 111). The rejection of the

resettlement dossier and the slow progress on park gazettement was partly because security forces in the Korup Forest Area did not want an area devoid of people to be created immediately adjacent to the border with Nigeria (Gartlan 1999: 245). Despite the refusal of some settlements to allow a second evaluation team to carry out their work, the reluctance of the Cameroon Government to provide funds for resettlement and the fact that the proposed park had not been officially gazetted, project planners continued to persist with their plans to resettle villages.

In 1984, Gartlan produced the first draft of the 'Korup Regional Management Plan' (Gartlan 1984). This document was the first point of reference for the implementation of plans of the Korup Project. Gartlan suggested in this document that, in addition to the six villages that lay within the reserve and the proposed extensions, it would be desirable to resettle all the villages located within two kilometers of the boundary of the proposed park, that were not separated from it by any natural physical boundary such as, Ngenye, Mufako, Akwa, Ekoneman Ojong, Nguru and Ekon (Gartlan 1984: 58). By 1984, the number of settlements which the project proposed would be relocated outside the proposed park area had risen from six to twelve. When Gartlan's plan was published, charity Earthlife offered funding to Bioresources to conduct a survey on the sites that are most habitable for resettlement. The survey identified two areas (the Toko and Mosongiseli areas) for resettlement of villages from inside the Korup National Park. On the one hand it was suggested by project planners that the villages of Ikenge, Bera, Esukutan and Bareka Batanga should be resettled in the Toko area. On the other hand, they also proposed that the two Korup villages of Erat and Ikondokondo should be moved to the Mosongiseli area.

2.1.2 Phase Two (1986-1988): Cameroon's Economic and Legislative Processes in Context

Prior to 1985, Cameroon's economic growth had been steady. But by 1985, as a result of a drop in petroleum revenue, and with a decline in the world prices for cocoa, coffee and palm oil, the country's economy was almost crawling on its knees. This period marked the start of economic crisis in Cameroon and led to the inauguration of a World Bank structural adjustment programme in 1987 (Malleson 2000). Almost concomitantly, state parastatals during the 1980s, including the Ndian oil palm plantation Estate, situated adjacent to the park, also started to run into financial difficulties (Malleson ibid). Consequently, the eventual closure of the oil palm mill was put on the agenda, and a large number of workers were laid off. This raised concerns that ex-workers would increasingly become involved in hunting within the park. Growing international concerns over environmental degradation, and the international focus on tropical forests and biodiversity, led the Cameroon Government to foresee the need for the formulation of an environmental policy. This was reflected in the Government's Sixth, Five Year Plan (1986-1991), which laid down proposals for the development of such a policy. Following this five-year plan, Cameroon drew up a tropical forestry action plan in 1988, with support from the World Bank. This plan called for political support for the conservation and sustainable management of forests. However, it had little impact on the forest situation in Cameroon (Tchoungui *et al* 1995: 37). With the growing economic crisis, Cameroon continued to look at timber exploitation as a convenient way to generate foreign exchange earnings (Horta 1991: 143). Thus, the amount of timber produced for the domestic market rose considerably. Some local observers, however, believed that the expansion of the timber trade would be constrained by the industry's poor infrastructure (Archival Reference W 1).

2.1.2.1 Korup Project's Proposed Activities in Phase two

The start of Phase Two of the Korup Project was marked by the official gazettement of Korup National Park. On October 30th 1986, Korup National Park was established by Decree No. 86/123. The Korup Forest Reserve (KFR) was included in the new Korup National Park and the reserve boundaries were extended eastwards to include the villages of Ekundu Kundu, Ikenge and Bareka Batanga. The enclaves around the villages originally situated inside Korup Forest Reserve were annulled, and the villages included within the new park boundaries had no new enclaves demarcated for them (Malleson 2000). This meant that the people who remained in the park had ambiguous legal statuses (Malleson ibid). Decree No. 86/123 also stated that a subsequent document would be issued demarcating the 'buffer zone', which until date has not been issued. At the same time that the Korup National Park (KNP) was decreed, the charity Earthlife signed an agreement with the Cameroon Government to provide the following assistance: technical assistance for agricultural development in the area around KNP; assistance to develop alternative sources of protein to enhance rural livelihoods, such as the production of livestock, and to reduce over dependence on forest animals. In addition, Earthlife was to provide a land-use assessment of some areas close to Korup National Park in order to identify areas in which villages from inside the park could be resettled and to assist in the design of roads in the area (Wicks 1986b: 4). For this work ODA provided Earthlife with a grant of 444,300 pounds under their Joint Funding Scheme over a three year period. In the same vein, as part of this agreement, the Government of Cameroon had accepted obligations to implement park protection, resettlement of the inhabitants of villages inside the park and also to construct roads linking resettled villages with nearby towns and neighboring villages.

2.1.2.2 Project's Development Activities and Dwindling Rural livelihoods in Phase Two

In January 1987, an expatriate consultant, Paul Devitt, made his first visit to the Korup Park area to coordinate the socio-economic component of the project and to provide the Cameroon Government with information about the impacts of the

project on the inhabitants of the settlements located within and around the KNP (Devitt 1988c). The findings of his research including those of other researchers argued against resettling those living on the periphery of the parks (Malleson 1987; Infield 1988; Elangwe 1988; see also Achu 1988; and Inyang 1988). Thus plans proposed in phase 1 to resettle villages around the periphery of the park were dropped in phase two (Malleson 2000). Phase two documents only took into consideration those villages within the parks to be eligible for resettlement (Malleson 2000). This decision was made because it was becoming clear that the costs of resettling 12 villages would be too large both for the Cameroon Government, in terms of compensation to be offered; and for the project management, in terms of the establishment of resettlement areas.

Hence, in January 1987, the supposedly resettled villages appointed their lawyers to represent their interests over the issue of resettlement. A delegation consisting of lawyers representing these villages met with the Secretary General of Tourism, and the Presidency to express the concern of their clients. These villages, in consultation and agreement with their lawyers presented certain conditions which argued, must be fulfilled if they were to be resettled. Some of these conditions include: the provision of 'block houses', better roads, social and health care services, financial compensations to name a few. Unfortunately for the local populations, the government of Cameroon was not prepared and unwilling to provide any compensation. This position is captured in the words of Devitt, quoting the then Secretary of state for Tourism during an official visit to Mundemba to talk on resettlement.

> *'……In response to a question from the floor, ….. the government had no money at present to implement a resettled programme, and that people now living in the park would have to remain there for the time being, while taking care not to break the law…. (Devitt 1998a:1; quoted in Malleson 2000).*

The above statement is a testament of the ambiguous statuses that have been enthrone on the villages to be relocated. Such a statement also clearly portrays the government's inability to provide support to the resettlement projects.

In early 1988, when charity Earthlife went into liquidation and on the 3rd February (Malleson 2000), the Cameroon Government signed a five year agreement to provide technical assistance for the Korup project with the WWF-UK. The Korup project was taken over entirely by the WWF, the ODA continued to provide financial assistance, and the objectives of the ODA-financed part of the project remained the same. In addition to the objectives laid out in the ODA application document (Wicks 1986b), the WWF project objectives were broadened to include assisting the Cameroon Government in the management of the KNP; developing park infrastructure; enforcing hunting regulations in the park; developing alternative sources of protein for local people; and developing a programme of scientific research (WWF 1987; see also Malleson 2000).

With the presence of WWF at the forefront of the project, laws prohibiting illegal hunting and harvesting of forest resources became tightened. Consequently, rural livelihoods was also affected greatly especially as access into these forests were denied. In addition, increasing numbers of guns were also seized from hunters by forest guards and conservation authorities; and the number of traps that were destroyed, substantially increased (Infield 1988; see also Malleson 2000). As a reaction to this squeezing-in of livelihoods, Infield has proposed the development of controlled hunting in the 'development area' in an attempt to prevent alienation of these communities (Infield 1988). Apart from the tightened forestry policies, this squeeze in local peoples' livelihoods was further made very severe in December 1988 when the government of Cameroon granted concession rights to timber exploiting companies in Cameroon. Rumors circulated amongst local populations that bush-meat was being evacuated in substantial quantities alongside commercial valuable timber tree like '*njabe*' (Malleson 2000). Rural populations use the seeds of this tree to make valuable cooking oil.

Local forest inhabitants were thus pushed to a tight corner by the Korup projects. In spite of this, the project offered very little alternative to safeguard livelihood. This position is greatly captured in the words of Malleson when she contends that little progress was made on developing alternative income generating activities proposed in the project's first phase (Malleson 2000). However, she further submits that very limited number of rural development activities was initiated. For instance, the project offered very little in terms of fruits and tree seedlings to local farmers. Worst still, the farmers sometimes could not afford these seedlings even at reduced rates. In addition, very few demonstration farms were established in settlements surrounding the parks, but which also benefited only some few 'leading farmers' (Malleson 2000). On the part of the government of Cameroon, it was evident that it completely abdicated its role in road provisioning and in resettlement compensation. This actually validated Devitts skepticism on the resettlement philosophy and implementation plan (Devitt 1988a).

Devitt as well as other project staff at the time had fearlessly expressed doubts about the necessity of resettlement (Malleson, 2000). Ruiteenbeek's (1988) paper raised strong legal, political, economic and scientific reasons for allowing people to continue to live within the park. But despite their strong arguments against resettlement, project planners continued to argue in support of resettlement (Malleson 2000). In his final report, Devitt (1988c) made a number of specific recommendations which did not earn him popularity by most project management and WWF planning staff. Hence he could not be allowed to continue his function as socio-economic consultant with the Korup project despite ODA's recommendation that a socio-economist should be part of an on-going sociological input to the project. Malleson (2000) further argues that majority of Dewitt's critical suggestions directed towards phase three of the project's rural development were largely neglected by project management.

2.1.3 Phase three (1989-1994) Political, Legislative and Economic Context

During this period, Cameroon's 'economic crisis' continued to worsen, accompanied by an increase in youth unemployment. In 1993, the Cameroon Government decided to undertake a series of reform programmes. As part of these reforms, civil servants' salaries were further cut and many of them were retired early (Malleson 2000). These trends led to a reversal of rural exodus, as unemployed people returned to their rural places of birth. *In January 1994 the CFA was devalued from 50 CFA per French franc to 100 CFA per French franc*. During the early 1990s, commercial timber exploitation and exportation in Cameroon increased dramatically. The Cameroon Government continued to regard timber as a principle source of foreign exchange to alleviate its economic crisis (Horta 1991). Prior to the 1990s, most people were reluctant to speak out openly about politics. However, the early 1990s ushered in a new process of political liberalization in Cameroon. These years were marked by a period of civil unrest in the run-up to multi-party presidential and parliamentary elections. Worldwide concern about the environment, in combination with economic decline in Cameroon, fostered in a growing popular concern over local environmental issues. At the same time, greater freedom of expression led many people to openly quarreled the state's inability to deliver 'development' and to challenge the role of the state and *elites* in relation to the use and access to forest resources in Cameroon.

When the Korup Project was first established, forestry and wildlife fell under the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Tourism respectively. As a forest reserve, most negotiations relating to Korup concerned the Ministry of Agriculture's Forestry department. But once the park was gazetted, the KNP became the responsibility of the Ministry of Tourism (Malleson 2000). In 1992, the responsibilities to cater for environmental protection and forestry were removed from the Ministries of Agriculture and Tourism and a new ministry of the Environment and Forests (MINEF) was created. The newly appointed Minister of MINEF participated in the Earth Summit, sponsored by the United Nations, at Rio

de Janeiro in 1992 (Malleson 2000). In preparation for the summit, MINEF, in collaboration with expatriate environmental and forestry advisers, prepared a current review of the environmental situation in Cameroon. Following the Rio summit and under pressure from the World Bank' s structural adjustment programme, the Cameroon government worked with conservation NGOs and other interested parties to propose new forestry and wildlife legislation (Tchoungui *et al* 1995: 37). The new forestry legislation (No. 94-01) was promulgated on 20 January 1994. Under it, major changes were proposed to allow, for the first time, the development of sustainable forest management by local communities through the institution of community forests. The 1994 Forestry Law, in theory, allows greater local participation in forest management. It was therefore welcomed by the Korup Project and other conservation projects in Cameroon because it provided the legislative framework for the establishment of forested areas managed by local communities. However, the 1994 Forestry Law must be activated by the passage of an 'application decree', which, in turn, must be followed by official administrative decisions (Malleson 2000). The 'application decree' was passed in 1995. In the same year, the ODA established the Community Forest Development Project which has, to date, been largely occupied with formulating procedures necessary for the practical implementation of the law (Malleson ibid).

2.1.3.1 What the Korup project proposed to do in Phase three

Following the consultant's report, it became clear that the Korup project planners had made very little progress in reaching either goals on conservation or development (Malleson 2000). The same report also indicated failure on the part of the Cameroon government to make available social and infrastructural provisioning. It became evident that external support was necessary to construct those roads and to provide other social and healthcare facilities. In realization of these, project planners suggested the need to come up with a new planning document- termed the master plan (Malleson 2000). Incorporated in this new planning document were some of the following proposals: First that rural development component of the next phase of the project should be expanded both

spatially and in terms of the scope of development activities. Second, this plan also urged for the creation of a buffer zone, also known as rural development zone around the Korup national park boundary. The Korup Project therefore covered a total area of about 350,000ha, almost three times larger than the Korup National Park itself.

Although many of Dewitt and Infield's recommendations were written into the 'master plan', KP policy took a new turn. Project planners and management suggested a 'carrot and stick' approach (Malleson 2000). The project would attempt to reduce poaching inside the park by patrolling and seizing meat. In addition, Korup Project policy prescribed that no development initiatives should take place in the settlements within the park. This was justified because it was felt that they would encourage the inhabitants to remain where they were and thus would work against the resettlement policy (Malleson 2000). The 'carrot' would be to 'develop' (provide roads, agricultural development, health and education facilities, etc.) areas around the KNP to try and encourage inhabitants of villages inside the park to voluntarily resettle in the 'support zone'. Some of the Korup Project staff and others warned against this approach because, although young people may well be keen to move, elderly people may be more reluctant and/or physically unable to resettle (Malleson ibid). Furthermore, Devitt had earlier pointed out that '….eventually the villages would be reduced to geriatric units, whose inhabitants would become progressively more dependent on the State, or the Project, or their distant relatives….. Social engineering of this kind has the possibility to pose great dangers of increasing human misery' (Devitt 1988a).

Despite the growing campaigns which emphasized the need to defend indigenous peoples' right against external influence, Korup project planners with support from the Cameroon government continued to be in support of resettlement as the only solution to effective conservation (Ministry of Plan and Regional Development 1989). The project documents had hope that tourism will generate more income

both to the local people and to the national government. But this was not the case. Project planners realized that tourism was unlikely to provide the benefits they previously anticipated.

2.1.3.2 What Korup Project actually did in this Phase Three

The Korup project provided copies of the ‘master plan’ to all the chiefs, elites and state officials concerned. But funds for the full implementation of the 'master plan' did not materialise until 1994. WWF continued to provide funds for park development and, to a much lesser extent, rural development (Malleson 2000). In the same manner, ODA also continued to provide some funds for rural development activities (Malleson ibid). Among the few successes recorded in phase three were the following: The first was the identification of alternative sources of income. This was manifested for instance, through the establishment of demonstration farms; the project also organized workshops and training programmes on bee-keeping and livestock production. Important to remark here is that almost all of the rural development activities initiated as alternative sources of incomes were concentrated on roadside settlements which where situated far-away from the Korup National Park boundaries. Little was done inside park villages because of the project’s policy banning them (Sweeting 1992:21).

The second was within the area of community participation in sustainable development and natural resource management. Malleson has argued that community participation in the management of forest areas in the Korup forest area was minimal (Malleson 2000). She further submits that nothing was done to move forward the proposal to establish community-based wildlife management areas around settlements in the 'support zone'; and that Korup Project's attempts to shut down logging concessions on the eastern boundary of the KNP was unsuccessful (Malleson ibid). Third, infrastructural developments carried out at this phase were almost modest, although not sustainable enough. For instance, some of the roads (for example the Mundemba-Toko road) were only accessible during the dry

season, and not in the rainy season. Same condition applies to the Mundemba-Isangale road.

Fourth, despite the lack of support from the Cameroon government, external bodies, and community people, the Korup project was bent on the resettlement of community people outside the park area. The choice of the first community to be resettled was based on Devitt's recommendation (Malleson 2000) although there are a lot of controversies over the choice of place to relocate these communities (Mbile 1991; Oates 1999; see also Röschenthaler 2000). These controversies did not only exist between planners and local peoples but also between the youths and the elders of the same villages concerned, especially among the Bareka-Batanga village (Röschenthaler 2000). This resulted in longer debates among project management and local people than expected (Oates 1999). Consequently, with the increasing shortage of funds that the project continued to experience, resettlements of these villages were put on hold. In the midst of these conflicting positions in relocating process, the management team decided to start the resettlement project by resettling the village of Ikondokodo. The resettlement of this village was used as a pilot project to test the effectiveness of resettlement (Röschenthaler 2000). The Korup project indeed succeeded in resettling just this village of Ikondokondo in February 2000 (Malleson 2000; Röschenthaler 2000). All the others are still in their ambiguous and transitional legal statuses, not knowing whether the future will bring them resettlement or not. They have been awaiting resettlement for more than fourteen (14) years today, and there has been no general agreement whether the people should be part of the national park or not (Röschenthaler 2000). It is in an attempt to do away with some of these ambiguities in peoples' statuses that this study seeks to interrogate the entire process of community resettlement, and understands its impact on livelihood chances.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology guiding this work. It explores the area of study, and the study design. It also discusses the sources of data, approaches to data analysis, as well as more practical questions related to research ethics, safeguarding subjectivity and community entry strategies. In general, these basically provide an overview of the ways data was elicited, while throwing light on some of the challenges encountered in the course of the field research.

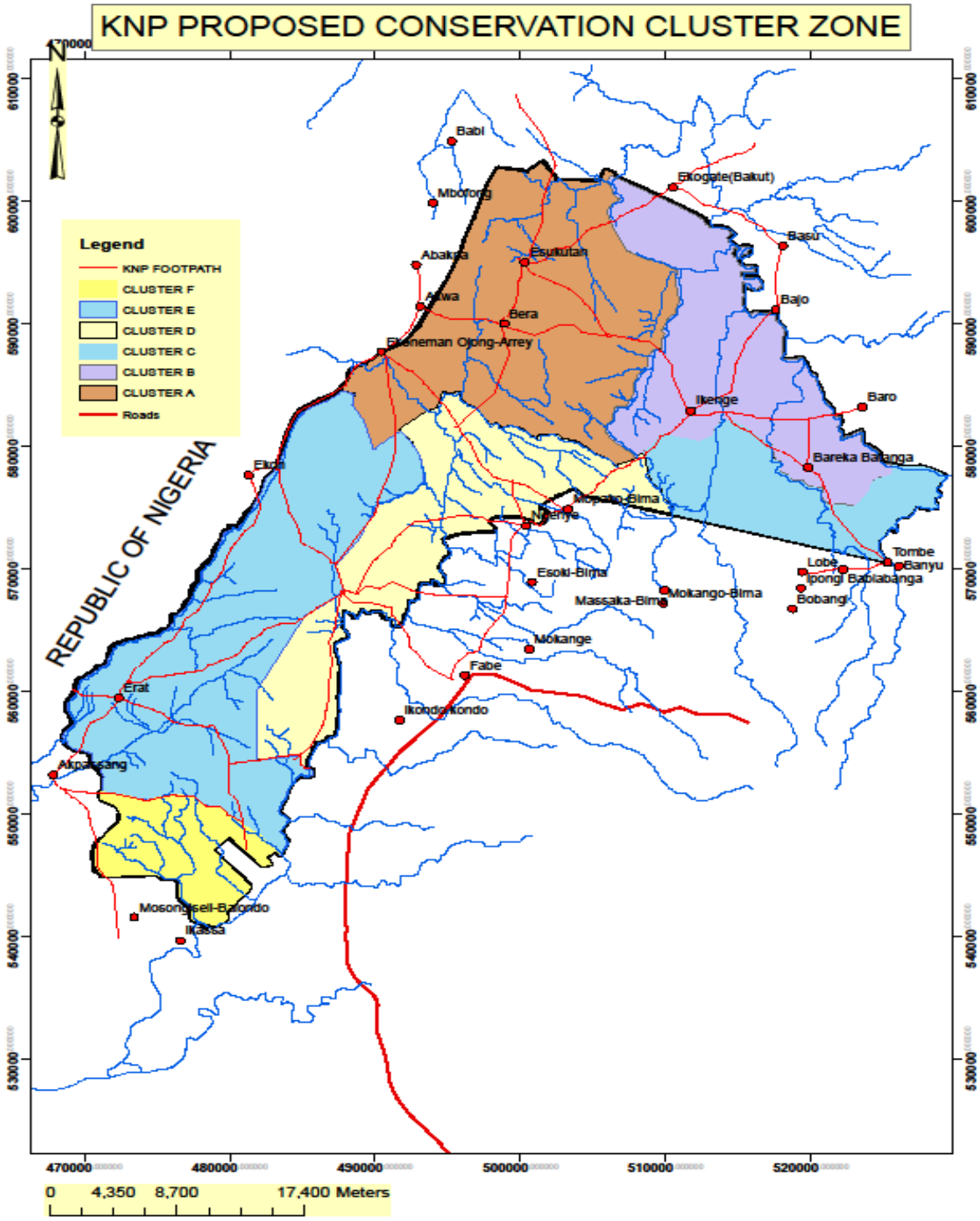
3.1 Description of Study Area

This field research was carried out in Ikondokondo village. This village is situated around the Korup National Park in South West Cameroon. This area has two major seasons: a pronounced dry season running from December to February and an intense wet season approximately from May to October. The region experience average annual rainfall of about 4,027 – 6,368 mm. Each year, the month of August typically experiences the heaviest rainfall, sometimes exceeding 10,000mm. Throughout the year, there is a slight variation in temperatures, with mean monthly temperature during the dry season being 31.8 degree Celsius and in the wet season, 30.2 degrees Celsius. The region is covered by dense tropical rainforest, and is one of Africa's biodiversity hotspots. Between the years 1996-2000, Ikondokondo village was used as a pilot study by the famous Korup project to test the effectiveness of community resettlement programmes. Present Ikondokondo village, or what is now known as 'Ikondokondo resettlement' has a total population of about 380 persons, with a total of 53 households. It is bordered by two neighboring villages -Fabe and Ituka. This resettlement village cannot boast of social facilities like electricity, pipe borne water, medical units and schools. Instead it relies on neighboring Mundemba town which is the sub-divisional headquarter for these amenities.

Unlike in the past when local inhabitants of Ikondokondo relied on natural resources such as non-timber forest products, and artisanal fishing (Ndeh 2010), the present settlement area offers little or no benefits of such kinds. The situation is even more precarious given that there exist very few employment opportunities in this new area (Röschenthaler 2000).

Consequently, in order to sustain a living, rural inhabitants of Ikondokondo village have no option than to embraced agriculture as a principal source of livelihood. They produce both food crops and cash crops; but also rear animals like goat, pig and fowl. These people tend to give preference to the cultivation of food crops which are staples in the area such as maize, bananas, cassava and cocoyams. Outputs from their farms are sometimes used to service the supply needs of nearby markets like Mundemba and Kumba. The animals which they raise are mostly used as guarantee to secure loans from neighbors or are marketed in times of extreme crises. Similarly, as a means of survival, some female youths are also involved in selling cooked food in the town of Mundemba. A fairly small amount of persons (about 3 persons in total) work as civil servants- (echo guards) with Korup, although, they fall back into their farms after working hours in an attempt to supplement their meager incomes and dietary needs of their families. The diagrams below show the study area.

Fig 4. Map of Proposed Conserve Areas in the Korup Zone



3.2 Description of Sample

The total population of the village of Ikondokondo is 380 persons, with about 53 households. The study makes use of a sample size of about 190 persons. Individual interviews were conducted. In addition, 10 focus group discussions were held with an average of 6 persons per group. The study also interviewed 30 different households. The different interviews were conducted among youths (0-20 years); adults (21-49 years) and aged (50 years and above). These groups encompass persons who are currently either living in the resettlement village of Ikondokondo or were involved in the resettlement programme in one way or another. In addition, the researcher conducted interviews with Korup project officials, as well as some local chiefs from neighboring villages. The idea of working with these different groups was to enable the investigator understand the different attitudes, perceptions and contribution of each group towards the resettlement programme.

3.3 Study Design

This is basically a descriptive qualitative study, which endeavours to understand the complexities surrounding community relocation exercises carried out among the peoples of Ikondokondo village of South west Cameroon. The study has made vast use of qualitative methodology in order to unveil the inadequacies of 'received wisdoms' (Leach and Fairhead 2000) in enacting positive change; as well as the impacts of such wisdoms on livelihood chances among forest community peoples of Ikondokondo village. The case of Ikondokondo village was selected purposefully since it represents one of the worst case scenarios on resettlement of community people where the repercussions have been immense. Moreover, Korup used this village as test on resettlement experiment. The experience from this pilot village project has enabled the Korup project to re-think alternatives to nature conservation and development approaches.

3.4 Data Collection Techniques

The techniques used to collect information from respondents included the following: Interview guides were used to collect information from the different actors involved in the Korup relocation project, as well as among local inhabitants of Ikondokondo village. Using this technique, respondents were interviewed mostly during evening hours when they must have returned from their farms. The researcher moved from house-to house and talked with especially heads of families, both male and female. In addition, youths were also interviewed since they equally have experiences on the resettlement programme. I also moved from place to place like in bars and small relaxation spots to interview people. The questions were design and posed depending on the direction of the discussion and how information on the resettlement unfolded. Follow-up questions were later on posed to clarify certain opinions and positions. The use of interview guide was good because it gives each person – male or female the possibility to voice his/her opinion with respect to how they perceive, feel and live the resettlement horror.

In addition, the study makes use of especially focus group discussions. This was made possible with the help of the chief of Ikondokondo and his council of elders. Prior to my arrival in the village, these authorities clearly inform the villagers of my date and time of arrival. Upon my arrival, local inhabitants of Ikondokondo village were already sited in their usual meeting spots. I arrived the village each day of my interview with a jug of palm wine for entertainment. As a group, I offer the respondents the opportunity to deliberate on a topic and to present to me their opinion as ‘a voice’. Through this approach, I was able to gain insights on what was actually going on, and how their lives and livelihood chances have been shaped, conditioned or transformed as a result of the resettlement.

3.5 Sources of Data Collection

Relevant data for analysis was elicited through ethnographic field research orientation. This involves the use of focus group discussions and interview guides. On the one hand, the rational of using focus group discussion is supported by the

fact that it makes the discussion participatory where both men and women are open to voice their opinions and to express the fears and uncertainties surrounding their lives as resettled people. Also with focus group discussions, opinions were shared and expressed, and this helped to unveil and make visible some of those invisible socio-cultural challenges instigated by resettlement. In addition, focus group discussion tends to empower those whose livelihoods were affected by relocation, but whose opinions were never considered during the planning and implementation process. Through focus group discussion, these local people were given the opportunity to express themselves.

On the other hand, interviews were conducted through the use of interview guides. Through the use of Interviews research participants were given the opportunity to accredit meaning and interpretation to the social world around them by giving values to their voices and subjectivities (*cf.* Limerick et al., 1996). Moreover, interviews can also help challenge the status-quo, since face to face contacts may allow for reciprocity between the participants and the researcher hence evoking more equitable research relationship (Raghuram et al., 1998: quoted in Akwen & Wanki 2011). Most importantly, the use of interviews enabled the researcher to be flexible and to be able to contextualize the experiences and explanations of the subject under study (Cohen & Manion 1989). Consequently, by employing the use of focus group discussions and interviews, this work sought to lend more voice to the people of Ikondokondo village.

Generally, this thesis made use of a variety of secondary sources of information. The Korup library provided valuable sources of information on resettlement of Ikondokondo village. In addition, the study has made use of books, journals, reports, credible Internet sources, statistical records from government departments such as the Delegation of Agricultural and Rural Development in Mundemba, German Technical Corporation Office (GIZ), and NGOs, articles and other publications dealing with conservation and resettlement around the Korup forest area. These documents were subjected to critical analysis and interpretations. In

addition, websites of organizations involved with conservation issues were also reviewed. Walliman has noted that, secondary sources can be very valuable in revealing diverse viewpoints on the events being studied (Walliman 2005). They offer a high quality of in-depth theoretical framework, drawn from a wider range of similar situations, but also provide great insight into the case being studied within a relatively short period of time and with limited resources (cf. Bryman 2008).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Entry into the field to collect data was facilitated by ethical clearance received from Wageningen University. This clearance was further presented to authorities in Mundemba such as the chiefs, sub-divisional and senior divisional officers and law enforcement officers. These authorities also issued me administrative clearance to enable me present my agenda to the research participants. The field work was facilitated since I had earlier visited the same community people some 7 years ago. I already understood some of the needed entry approaches and strategies. All study participants were duly informed of the nature and purpose of my research, and were also informed of their choice to withdraw, should they feel not to continue. Authorities were notified by phone calls prior to my visit. In cases of meetings with the villages, the chief assigns the 'town crier' to announce my arrival. Before every interview or focus group discussion, I always reintroduce myself and the purpose of my study. Considering that a large majority of these participants are farmers, we often agree to hold our meetings during evening hours from 4pm, after they must have returned from their farms.

3.7 Limitations of Study

This study was conducted at a time when there was a lot of chaos over issues on nature conservation. Scrambling over land, or land grabbing by private investors was at its apex during the period of my research. When I got to Mundemba to request for administrative clearance, I was seriously interrogated by the forces of law and order, the divisional officer, mayor and commissioner of police. They asked me to explain to them the purpose of my research and the agency sponsoring

me. I was accused for haven been sent either by SCSOC or one of the private investors in Germany especially as my university clearance clearly identified me as a European Commission Erasmus Mundus student. They claim I was one of those ‘brain-washed’ African-Europeans, who have come to deceive ‘their people’ on conservation issues. Thus, it took me some considerable time to clarify myself to the authorities and to obtain a clearance from them.

Even in the course of my interviews with some Korup project officials, they tried to with held certain information about the project. Notwithstanding, by virtue of my nationality as a Cameroonian, coupled with my ability to speak the local language (Pidgin English) I could easily explain myself to them, and to clarify situations. In addition, the challenge of penetrating local people was also solved through the use of one of the natives who happen to be assisting me.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This section of the thesis is preoccupied with the presentation and discussion of key trends emerging from field data. First, the chapter opens by revealing the different contestations surrounding the relationship between forest resources and local forest dwellers in and around the Korup forest reserve. Two contrasting opinions are presented here: on one extreme is the argument that forest inhabitants of Ikondokondo village live in harmony with the forest. On the other extreme is the argument that the presence of humans in the Korup forest area threatens the very existence and growth of forest and forest resources. Perhaps in a more experiential manner, the chapter also demonstrates the mechanics of dominance through which particular discourses found in the environmental conceptual and theoretical toolboxes eventually translate into policy interventions which in turn, exact dramatic, widespread, and far reaching implications for peoples' very livelihood chances in Cameroon. The second section of this chapter explores the motivation surrounding community resettlement and the extent to which these have ushered in, and amplified severe dislocation of community people and their eventual disconnection from resource access. This part of the thesis also casts light on local peoples' reactions to the idea of resettlement.

In an attempt to interrogate the authoritative nature of top-down approaches to conservation and development initiatives, the third section of this chapter revisits some of the agro-ecological management practices, which had constituted the everyday realities of the people of Ikondokondo prior to their resettlement. It also shows the extent to which livelihood practices are dismantled in an attempt to impose top-down-driven initiatives on local peoples' culture and ways of life. The fourth section of this chapter looks at the impact of such policies on livelihood chances of some hundreds of forest dwellers living in the resettlement village of Ikondokondo in Southwestern Cameroon. The fifth section endeavours to

understand the safety nets that were put in place by project authorities to enable local inhabitants cope with the stresses and challenges of resettlement. Most importantly, this section of the chapter also cast bright light on some of the crucial, yet often underreported strategies employed by local peoples to adapt to, and mitigate the resultant economic, social, cultural and environmental stresses of resettlement. The sixth section is concerned with understanding the impacts of community resettlement by employing Halfacree's theoretical position on the conceptualization of rural spaces.

4.1 Contrasting positions in People-Forest Relation in Cameroon

In Cameroon, about half of the land surface is covered by forest. Most forest dwellers depend on these forests as a source of livelihood. These people relate with the forest in one way or the other and share the 'culture of the forest' as manifested through their interaction with the forest itself. There are two forms of discourses that surround the relationship between local communities and forest resources in Cameroon.

The first discourse identifies local people as living in harmony with the forest. This discourse embraces such interactions and sees it as necessary to foster conservation measures by arguing that local people can use their resources 'wisely'. Proponents of this hold that forest people have a surprisingly profound knowledge of the nature of plants and the types of animals in the forest areas where they live. Ichikawa (2006) has since lend his support to this position after his vast ethnographic research experiences in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo and Congo Kinshasa. The second discourse sees the relationship between humans and forests resources as threats to the very survival and existence of the forest and forest resources. Hence, this discourse argues that effective conservation measures should disconnect human activities from forest resources. Analyses of these two main discourses are presented below:

4.1.1 Position A: Local inhabitants as living in harmony with the forest

Prior to community relocation, local inhabitants of Ikondokondo completely depend on the forest as a source of livelihood. These local inhabitants cultivate different kinds of food crops (like cocoyam, potatoes, cassava, maize, yams and bananas), as well as few cash crops like cocoa and coffee. They also depend on the harvesting and utilization of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) such as wild honey, mushrooms, eru, njangsang, and bitter kola to name a few. In addition, the men folk were involved in the hunting of some wild species of animals, while their women sometimes undertook fishing in rivers within the forest area, and were also involved in the harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Cumulatively, these activities explain their livelihoods and survival strategies. Culturally, they use the forest as a place for prayers and also to perform certain rituals. Barks of trees, roots and leaves are used for medicinal and cultural purposes. In fact these people live a 'forest culture'.

In a similar manner, apart from being just beneficiaries of the forest and its resources, community peoples have equally been very instrumental in constructing and re-building the forest. For example, while they have a long tradition of harvesting non-timber forest products (such as njansang, cola nuts, cashew, mushrooms and eru) from the forest, they were also very active in planting valuable economic tree crops like mango, pear, plums, cocoa, coffee to name a few, not just around their village huts but also extended well-beyond their area of settlement, thereby creating for themselves and their environment, 'man made forests'. In many ways, while these fruit-trees greatly complemented their dietary needs, they also contributed enormously in re-building the forest cover and to protect the soil from excessive erosion, including soil moisture loss. Consequently, this discourse sees place framing as the interaction between both the human (community people) and non-human entities (forest resources), and argues that for conservation measures to be effective, there should exist very strong connectivity between humans and their natural environment. Unfortunately, this position has been seriously refuted by the second discourse which ensues.

4.1.2 Position B: Local communities as 'threats to the environment and forest Resources

Contrary to seeing local inhabitants as living in harmony with nature, this discourse argues that local community people constitute threats to their natural environment, and therefore should be disconnected from inflicting continuous harm on the forest and forest resources. This discourse neglect the human-forest interaction as been necessary in shaping the forest. Guided by the western perspective on conservation, this discourse seeks to create pristine ecosystems that will be completely free of any human encroachment. Hence, argues that effective forest intervention measures should take the form of community relocation. The arguments presented by this discourse gained grounds and was highly supported during the 1980s, when the Government of Cameroon, under pressure from conservation bodies like WWF embarked on the establishment of National Parks in an attempt to protect some plants and animal species from extinction. Consequently, the establishment of the Korup National Park and the eventual displacement of the Ikondokondo village is a good example of how nature conservation discourses shape practices.

4.2 Drivers in Community Resettlement

During the 1980s, in an attempt to protect forest resources in Ndian division of Southwestern Cameroon, the government decided to establish a national park popularly known as the Korup National Park. Conservation bodies such as World Wildlife Fund-UK (WWF) and the German Technical Corporation (formerly GTZ) spearheaded this project. These organizations under the banner of 'Korup project' in alliance with the government of Cameroon argued that the law governing forest conservation in Cameroon does not allow local inhabitants to live inside national parks. Hence, the strategy adopted by the Korup project was to resettle local community people to lands quite distant and different from their ancestral lands. The project argued that disconnecting forest dwellers from nature will help to foster the natural growth of the forest and also to restore certain species of flora and fauna.

Prior to relocation, information gathered from the field shows that to some extent, baseline studies were conducted, although it is actually questionable how extensive and neutral were these planning processes. The Korup project promised to compensate local forest dwellers of Ikondokondo village forms of material, technical and financial supports. For instance, the people were promised, better housings, medical facilities, agricultural lands, schools, and better roads to name a few. Based on these promises, most local inhabitants of Ikondokondo village were quick to give their support, especially the chiefs, and those of neigbouring villages who received 'special gifts' from the project. Initially, the project intended to relocate 6 communities, but at the end, only the village of Ikondokondo, which was used as a pilot village, was successfully relocated

4.3 Justifying community resettlement

Conservationists identified a number of key land and resource use problems in the Korup Forest Reserve (KFR), based on the assumption that the ever-expanding local forest dwellers and their engagements in the utilization of natural resources in and around the Korup forest reserves were causing irreversible destruction of the forest environment (Gartlan 1984). Firstly, they assumed that agricultural production was largely limited to subsistence production due to low soil fertility and also because local farmers were ignorant of the ecological principles that lay behind sound farming practices in the rainforest environment (Gartlan 1984: 90). Secondly, they also claimed that people in the Korup forest depend largely on bush-meat as their principal source of animal protein and that such over dependence would potentially lead to the extinction of some protected forest species in the Korup forest area of Southwestern Cameroon (Gartlan 1984: 71).

Thirdly, according to Gartlan's ethnographic research endeavour in the Korup forest area, malnutrition was assumed to be a major health problem in the Korup forest largely because of limited production in agriculture, coupled with ignorance on more effective, efficient and sustainable systems of crop and animal production (Gartlan 1984: 54). Consequently, Gartlan, including a host of other conservation

agencies believed that through the conservation and development of Korup forest reserve local peoples will benefit directly from the project. For instance through the development of plant pharmaceuticals (Gartlan 1984:113) and tourism (Gartlan 1984: 88). Hence, they argued that ethno-botanical research on the rich diversity of plants in the Korup forest would reveal a range of plant compounds which could be used as medical cures and would generate income for local people. Similarly, it was also assumed that the establishment of the Korup National Park would create employment opportunities for game guards as well as in the catering and hotel sector through the development of tourism (Gartlan 1984: 91).

Another major reason given by project planners to resettle local peoples of Ikondokondo was that once the park was created, most of the economic activities of the people living within the park would be prohibited by law (Malleson 2000). In addition, resettlement was also justified on grounds that, if the villages inside the park remained where they were, economic development would be constrained largely by the physical limitations of poor soils and geographical remoteness. Consequently, it was argued that through resettlement, social and economic conditions in the areas further away from the proposed park area would be improved through the construction of roads, public amenities, agricultural interventions and the development of tourism and plant pharmaceuticals (Gartlan 1984). Thus it was argued that resettlement of villages away from designated park areas would then enable the inhabitants of these villages to benefit from the project's planned 'development' initiatives. Thus, the idea of resettling these villages in areas outside the park and assisting them to improve their socio-economic status became a key factor in the project's rural development component.

4.4 (In) voluntary Resettlement of Ikondokondo

Although the Korup project labeled the resettlement of the people of Ikondokondo village as 'voluntary resettlement', in practice, the process was far from being voluntary. Following the information collected during the field research, most residents of resettled Ikondokondo argue that the resettlement plan was the government's initiative in an attempt to keep them away from accessing the forest.

The quotation below summarizes the government of Cameroons' position towards the creation of national parks as presented by one local chief. He posits:

> *'……when Korup project came up, they were made us to understand that a national park has to be created and that by law, we were not allowed to live inside the national park…..*

The above statement is in conjunction with the law governing that creation of national parks in Cameroon. Consequently, irrespective of the arguments put forward by local inhabitants in the Korup forest area, their views were never taken into consideration. They were definitely left with no option other option to accept the resettlement conditions. As an approach to win the masses, the korup project was presented as a development project- a project intended to give local people access to improved social and healthcare facilities as well as better economic opportunities. In practical terms, such an agenda was not true because resettlement only came in as a second option to satisfy the first option- which is nature protection. Consequently, local inhabitants of Ikondokondo see such movement as involuntary. Local populations even recounted situation where some older persons in the village at the time of relocation resisted to move-'crying out loud of outright neglect by the Cameroon government'. – that only a caterpillar will take them away from their ancestral land. These people from inception perceived the dangers of moving into a strange land. They also question the security of such a new place. As if they knew what would happen, the impacts of their resettlement, even till today is still very challenging on the part of the local peoples. They see themselves as abandoned children.

> *'We wish we were never resettled. Our lives are more uncertain than usual….. We do not know what tomorrow has for us. Look at our houses, the walls are all collapsing and the roofs are having holes everywhere……' (a youth leader of Ikondokondo village)*

In addition, local inhabitants of Ikondokondo have brought to question the nature of development that the project seeks to provide. They argued that, if the project cannot guarantee their survival today, then for whom are they protecting the forest? Hence, they arrive at a conclusion that the forest is being protected for private gains- to be consumed by some private companies. This is already evident given that today everyone can witness the influx of large timber companies owning

concessions. It is not also uncommon to find large agro plantation companies like pamol, Herackle farms and SCSOG, owning vast hectares of land, with no benefits reaching local populations as their original manifesto would indicate. In summary, the decision to relocate community people was not the choice of the local inhabitants of Ikondokondo as erroneously argued by the Korup project. The resettlement agenda was an attempt to foster conservation and development initiatives regardless of what happens to the livelihood chances of local populations.

4.5 Reactions to resettlement: Shifting, Contradictory Positions over Willingness to Move

The idea to resettle villages living within and around the demarcated Korup reserve was debated upon for the first time in December 1981. The then Senior Divisional Officer of Ndian Division addressed a letter to the villages concerned, informing them of their eventual evacuation. '….'it is envisaged that you will be moved for resettlement elsewhere so that you can enjoy better facilities in future' (Devitt 1988:40 in Schmidt-Soltau 1999). To make the resettlement scheme more attractive to the local people, Schmidt-Soltau's (1999) report further stipulated that the local inhabitants of Ikondokondo were told that resettlement was inevitable and imminent, but that it would offer better amenities and opportunities than those currently available. The scheme also pledged to offer financial, material and technical compensation to the people concerned (Devitt 1988: 40).

From inception, the idea of the resettlement initiative did not appear appealing to the people of Ikondokondo village. On the one hand, most of the elders (over 95% of them) did not want to move. They were already socially and culturally anchored in their land of origins. On the other hand, a small fragment of the elderly population (about 5%) constituting the chief and His council of elders who got 'higher compensation packages' were quick to accept the resettlement package. This smaller group of person's was very instrumental in persuading other members of the village to accept resettlement as a better option. They were also among the few persons who passively participated in the planning of the resettlement scheme.

A substantial majority of the populations were not consulted or nor did they have any say throughout the entire process: from designing, planning and implementation of the resettlement scheme.

In other words, according to the people of Ikondokondo village, resettlement was a form of elite based or penetrative consultation. That is to say consultation was done in a way that the local peoples could only receive what has been structured and designed by the project. Consequently, from the initial start of the scheme, most persons in the village of Ikondokondo were totally against resettlement. The local populations of Korup held the belief that the Korup National Park is a white man's, not a Cameroonian initiative. Some of them held claims that the land was quite rich with some unknown mineral resources and have been bought over by the Europeans (Devitt 1988; Infield 1988 and Schmidt-Soltau 1999).

Conscious of the hesitant positions on the part of the local populations, the Korup project continue to make the scheme more promising by attaching attractive compensation packages to the scheme. Mindful of their poverty situation, and mindful of the inability to send their children to school, most of them gradually began shifted their position in favour of resettlement hoping that their living conditions will be enhanced. The youths were quicker to give in to the resettlement terms than the elderly persons in the society. These youths gradually began to compromise their positions condition that the project will provides them with certain benefits including a village school, healthcare centre, a village church to name a few. But unfortunately, this was not the case. In fact, after resettlement, they tend to find themselves in even more difficult situations than they were previously experienced. As many of them lamented, most of the promises were never fulfilled. Put in this tight corner, these people feel most frustrated than they have ever been. At the moment, they look up to the government of Cameroon to come to their rescue. In comparative terms, the youthful population appears to have made a wise decision to accept the resettlement since they can now go to schools and access health and social infrastructures of neighboring Mundemba. But the

older persons express feelings of regret. Haven lost connections with their ancestors. These old persons feel like they should go back to their former environment.

4.6 Local Agro-ecological management practices prior to community resettlement

Historically, forest dwellers of Ikondokondo find pleasure living in the forest and so would always desire to maintain it. Prior to their relocation, they tried to create forest belts or islands around their immediate environments. According to these people, the presence of forest is quite valuable as a source of livelihood (*cf* Sharpe 1998). Sharpe strictly argues in support of the existence of a symbiotic relationship between forest resources and local inhabitants in Cameroon. In the words of the local people of Ikondokondo village, the forest not only service their economic and socio-cultural needs, but also makes the environment always airy, fresh, and also serves as wind breaks and prevents the invasion of wild fires from destroying their crops and houses. For these reasons, inhabitants of Ikondokondo village therefore encourage the development of forest islands around their settlements more or less deliberately in the course of their daily life. They do this by practically indulging in the planting of tree crops like kolanut, cashew, plums, bananas, mangoes and coffee to name a few. Local inhabitants also use these trees to manage soil fertility, and to add to the amount of tree cover around them. According to these people, such attempts in tree crop planting in many respects favours the development of additional plant species. Other forest inhabitants of West Africa have practiced this system of tree crop cultivation. For instance, Fairhead and Leach (1996) have made similar observations on how some local forest inhabitants of West Africa have use their agency and employed some sound on agro- ecological management practices in an attempt to sustainably manage their local environment.

Of particular importance, these forest dwellers often engaged in the cultivation of particular types of tree crops depending on the nature and type of soils. For instance, in wet areas, these local inhabitants grow ‘rafia palms’- a species of palm which produces palm wine. This type of plant notably has the capacity to extract

substantial quantities of ground water, hence can only be grown in swampy or very moist soils.

The nature of the houses in which local inhabitants live gives them the impetus to be conscious of their environment. These people lived mostly in traditionally built houses, covered with thatched roofs. This form of housing puts them at risk in case of any fire outbreaks. These forests provide partial protection to these locally built houses (*cf* Fairhead and Leach 1996). Consequently, by developing forest belts around their houses, they can better manage the fragile nature of these houses in the event of any fire disaster. Thus it was not uncommon to notice patches of locally grown trees in areas that in the past were occupied by these forest people. Moreover, tree establishment and growth are further exacerbated by humans going into hiding places to defecate and by the fertility added by domesticated animal manure, including ash and cooking waste.

Another local agro-ecological practice usually undertaken by the people of Ikondokondo was by promoting seed dispersal. Information gathered during field interviews shows that local inhabitants of the Korup forest area were very instrumental in the spreading of seeds of seeds of mangoes, palms, and oranges (Sharpe, 1998; Malleson, 2000). In addition, local peoples of Ikondokondo will let go some rodents which were quite helpful in spreading farther some of these seeds. Over time, these seeds would grow up not only around the village area where they live, but will also extend to other parts of the forest itself belt where any form of human activities has taken place. The existence of these fruit trees amidst other plant species goes a long way in enhancing the amount of plant species in the forest.

Moreover, local inhabitants of Ikondokondo also supplemented their dietary needs by rearing cattle. Households kept local species of animals such as pigs, goats and chicken. While these animals help to service the dietary intake of this people, these animals also serve as collateral to most households. In times of hardship, they sell these animals to generate some additional income for the family. Consequently, in

many respects, local peoples' encroachment into the forest is often regulated through the consumption of these domestic animals.

During periods of crop cultivation, cattle are occasionally tethered on the outer edge of the forest islands and this go a long way to expand on the size of vegetation cover by fostering the development particular plant species. A variety of food crops like cocoyams, plantains, bananas, and cassava were cultivated. These different crops greatly contributed in the amount of plant species in the forest. The cultivation of these different crops also helped in opening up the soil. Casta et al., (1989) have rightfully argued that frequent cultivation enhances infiltration and water supply to vegetation cover. Consequently making the soil to become very porous, this in turn favours the growth and succession of different varieties of herbs and shrubs in the Korup forest reserve. A few studies of fallow dynamics show that certain local agricultural practices encourage the regeneration of secondary forest (Amanor 1994; Guilley et al., 1993). Implicitly, the agricultural practices previously undertaken by the Inhabitants of Ikondokondo also generates the development of the Korup forest. Hence, vegetation dynamics cannot be adequately understood without taking a glance at the social dynamics (*cf* Fairhead and Leach 1996)

In addition, Ikondokondo forest community people practiced mixed cropping systems. For instance, they grow cash crops like coffee and bananas (which are often taller). In between these perennial crops, they also grow vegetables and other food crops such as cocoyams and cassava. These food crops (mostly tubers) take shorter duration to mature. The taller crops act as shades and winds breaks to the shorter crops, and also regulate the amount of sunlight that reaches them especially as they usually require lower light intensity. In essence, the system of farming contributes not only in enhancing the vegetation cover, but also play fundamental roles in regulating the amount of soil moisture gained or loss. Another most spectacular agro-ecological farming practice is fallow: a tendency for cultivated lands to be abandoned for a period of 3-4 years in order that the soil regains its

fertility. Fallow enables a variety plants and animals species to find abandoned lands as attractive hotspots for their growth and survival. Local inhabitants of Korup forest area generally saw these local practices as been the most sustainable and effective ways to benefit from the available resources. Unfortunately, government officials as well as pro-Korup project officials were so blinded to have realized the invaluable contributions provided by these local people in protecting and enhancing their environment (*cf* Malleson, 2000).

Consequently, by ostracizing these local inhabitants from the forest lands in which they have partly structured, this can precipitate forest lost in the Korup forest area. Like with the Kissidougou case, Fairhead and Leach's findings show that when people are uprooted or delinked from the forest, its management and protection becomes difficult (Fairhead and Leach, 1996)

4.7 Livelihood challenges after resettlement of community people

Resettled Ikondokondo community people in Cameroon are confronted with series of challenges ranging from inaccessible roads, inadequate health care facilities, unemployment, lack of pipe borne water, to name a few. Consequently, when the Korup project was introduced, it carefully identified some of these rural challenges and positioned itself as the messiah promising to provide solution to most of the challenges confronting rural Ikondokondo village. On the basis of these promises, the local inhabitants easily welcomed the idea of been relocated, with the belief that they would be able to lead a better and healthier life, which was/is not the case. The following paragraphs highlight some of the problems and/or challenges associated with the displacement of community people of Ikondokondo in the context of conservation policies in south West Cameroon.

The most serious problem which Ikondokondo resettlements face is that of degrading housing conditions. Given that there was no consensual agreement between the local people and the project on what to do or on what choice of houses to choose from, the project merely imposed on the people the so-called 'modern' structures. The nature of the houses chosen by Korup project went contrarily to

what the people had desired. Local inhabitants preferred brick houses with aluminum roofs. But the project provided them with 'sun-dry' bricks with tile roofs. From casual observation, what Korup provided seems good, but their sustainability was questionable. The people from inception were very skeptical on how to manage such roofs in the absence of Korup. And the project made with little or no effort to train local inhabitants on how to do maintenance work in the event of leakages. Unfortunately, given the degrading state of the houses over the last 7 years, local community peoples are very poor to afford maintenance cost for these structures. Hence, some of them are now living in houses that are much more dilapidated than those they own. Most worryingly, local inhabitants thought that they would retain the machine, which was used in fitting the tile roofs, so that in the near future, they will be able to make use of such machine to repair the roofs by themselves in the absence of Korup. Unfortunately, with the end of the Korup Project, the project implementers left with the machines and other construction tools. This made it impossible to undertake any maintenance work in the future. Consequently, in such degrading state of the houses, the local people of Ikondokondo feel more frustrated than they had ever been. And expression from the chief counsel Pa Usim Peter summarizes such feelings:

> *'…. Before Korup came, we were fine, we were very happy with ourselves and our way of life…… but now, we are just like abandoned children….'(Pa Peter Usim, chief Counsel)*

Second, Ikondokondo resettled forest community people face the challenge of relating with their ancestors because of such displacement. These local forest community people attach a lot of value to their lands-both materially and culturally. These people believe that by living in the lands of their ancestors, they can easily relate with their forefathers, for instance through ritual performance and incantation. Similarly, through village shrines and the 'traditional gong' they communicate with their ancestors and celebrate cultural events. Unfortunately, after relocation, these forest dwellers lose almost all of these cultural assets, especially the village shrines and the 'traditional gong'. Consequently, local people have problems performing certain rituals and reaching and communicating with their

ancestors. This great lose is captured in the words of the chief of Ikondokondo when he lamented:

> *'At the former site, there were sacred pools like rivers, forest, where people were not allowed to farm or fish, and were used for specific traditional purposes. But at this new site, these sacred places are absent, making it impossible to perform certain traditional rituals. For example, the big traditional gong was abandoned at the former site. For this reason, some traditional rites cannot be performed, and some are completely abandoned' (chief Awoh of Ikondokondo).*

A third challenge suffered by the people of Ikondokondo village has to do with declining yields in agriculture productivity as a result of the limited patches of arable land allocated to them, coupled with the presence of hostile climatic changes. Unlike in the past when they practiced shifting cultivation, with the establishment of Korup national park, farming activities have been restricted only within particular geographical confines. The patches of land allocated for food and cash crop production have questionable soil fertility due to previous over-farming. The problem of shortage in food production is even more precarious given that local people no longer have direct access to the forest, which in the past, have been the main source of animal protein to them. During one of the focus group discussion, the villages asserted that in general life has become even more difficult than that use to experience in the past. This is captured in the voice of when elder when he remarks

> *'At the moment because of too much difficulties and hunger, we consume tubers like akwana which we never consumed in the past' (one villager remarked during a focus group discussion).*

Moreover, the Korup project introduced new varieties of palm and other seedlings, which were completely unfamiliar to the people. In order words, the people were introduced to a new culture, in which they needed to adapt. Ironically, local people of Ikondokondo village preferred to rely on wild species of especially palms, which they assume are more resistant to extreme weather conditions, and also have longer lifespan. However, due to increase in their population, the outputs generated from these traditional species were unfortunately, not sufficient enough to satisfy the needs of the increasing population.

Another challenge posed by resettlement of community people is that the Korup project made no provisions to ensure any effective systems of accountability to service the needs and grievances of relocated peoples. For this reason, some of the compensation provided by the project to the local people never reached the intended beneficiaries. Some of these compensations were instead sold to these same people, whereas these compensations were supposed to be provided free-of-charge. For instance, the number of seedlings that local peoples received from the project was far below the number that was allocated to each household by the project. Most of these material compensations remained in the 'bread baskets' of the most powerful. As powerless as they are, especially as most of them are uneducated, these people have nothing to say or do; neither could they even put forth any convincing argument in support of their plight. Another problem is the over promises made by Korup, which were never fulfilled. For example, in the domain of health, the project promised to put in place health structures, which were never done.

Furthermore, it is possible to partly explain the myriad of challenges in the Ikondokondo area in terms of the peoples' inability to stand up and take their destinies into their hands. For instance, Korup officials interviewed complained bitterly, summarily linking the challenges faced by the people to their arrant laziness, and unwillingness to adopt new and tested methods of crop production that are high-yielding. On their part, while acknowledging their reluctance in engaging fully into agriculture, the people countered such allegations, claiming instead that the Cameroon government had summarily abandoned them to their fate. They fault the government's lack of support, corrupt officials, the relatively expensive prices of seedlings, and low prices for the purchase of their produce. In the apt words of one local chief, the government of Cameroon had sold the Ikondokondo people to 'foreigners'- (the 'whiteman') to determine their fate.

4.8 Coping strategies after resettlement of forest community

Like many other conservation and development projects in Cameroon, the Korup project had promised to compensate all the villages to be relocated. And it was based on these promises that villagers accepted the project. However, it is worth mentioning that many of the promises made were never fulfilled. These promises were used as means to cajole the local population to cede to their demands or to accept the idea of relocation. The project promised to provide some of the following: Installation allowance of 45,000FCFA (Euros approx. 68.6) per household; lands for agriculture; free housing to every adult above the age of 21 years old; free seedlings of palms, plantains, cocoa, coffee, maize etc; free labour to initiate the development of farms; and free agriculture extension workers. However, information gathered from the field shows that the material, technical and financial support mechanisms, which the project provided, were far less than what the people actually anticipated. For example, some households were expecting to receive 200 seedlings of palms and plantains each, but could only receive 70 at the end of the distribution. Although the project made provisions to some of these items, due to lack of accountability and transparency, local people of Ikondokondo never received what was entitled to them. This is the case with many other benefits that local people were supposed to receive from the project.

Notwithstanding, through this same project, local community people benefited in some ways through access to roads, through which they could transport their produce to the market, and also reach other neigbouring villages for business and/or other socio-cultural activities. In addition, the new site also offers access to main markets like the Mundemba market; and also enabled access to medical services, Furthermore, the project provided free labour to local farmers to enable them develop their farmlands, although not every farmer benefitted from such free labour. Moreover, since over 95% of the displaced community people were illiterate and mostly practiced subsistence farming systems, the project also provided agricultural extension workers to aid farmers with new and improved methods of crop production in their individual farms. Most importantly, in order to

increase their resilience and enable them successfully embrace agriculture as a principal source of livelihood, and to be less dependent on forest resources, especially hunting, the project made on promise to provide local farmers who were able to cultivate 4 hectares of land, the sum of 400,000FCFA (approx. Euros 610) per household per year. This support was to be provided over a period of 20 years. However, information gathered from the field shows that farmers never received such sums of money.

Similarly, in the midst of such challenges, local peoples of Ikondokondo village have been able to discover themselves and the extent to which their livelihood chances have been compromised by the project. Some of them are actively involved in different activities in an attempt to improve on their survival chances. For example; some are seriously into farming business, growing varieties of crops like cocoyams, sweet potatoes, plantains, bananas and cassava. Cassava production is seen as a very important food crop, generating fast income. Cassava is grown and sold either unprocessed to buyers in Mundemba or they used it to produce garri. Others are into cash crop production, producing cocoa and palms. Local farmers of Ikondokondo resettlement often cultivate different varieties of crops depending on the season and on the market. In most cases, they practiced mixed-cropping in order to reduce the risk of complete loss in case of unfavorable condition. Most of these villagers also raise fowls, goats, and pig. They use these animals for subsistence, but also to generate income in times of family crises. Animals like pigs and goats are used as collateral should the family needs financial assistance from neighbours.

4.9 Understanding the Impacts of Ikondokondo Resettlement via the Lens of Halfacree (2007)

The Korup resettlement programme required the compulsory displacement of local community people from their ancestral lands into new locations. On the one hand, the project created feelings of deprivation among forest dwellers since the livelihood chances of those people were compromised. On the other hand, it completely shattered the social, economic and cultural relations between the local Ikondokondo village and other neighboring villages. Hence, such an approach to

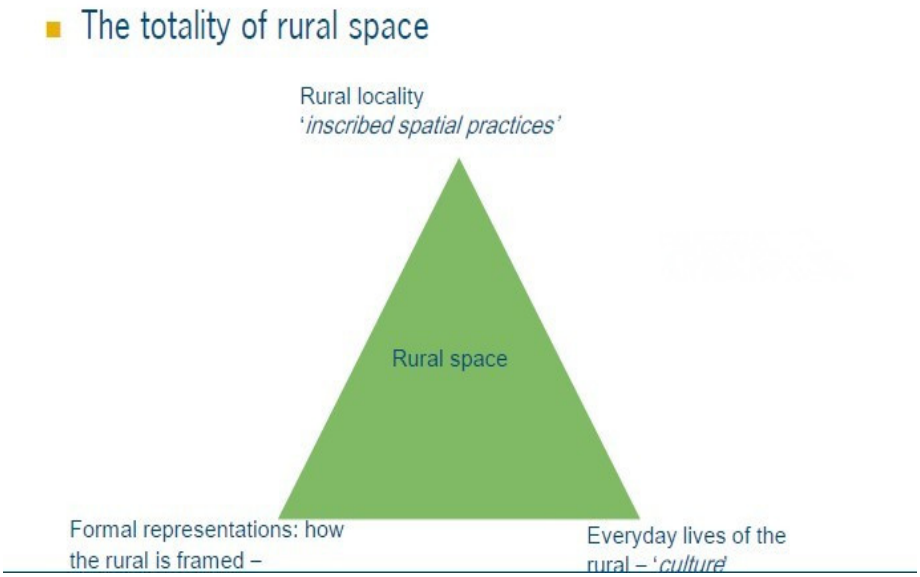
development intervention, which creates disconnections between local inhabitants and their sources of livelihoods, has often received widespread contestations. This have simultaneously resulted into series of conflicts between development agencies and the local people of Ikondokondo village on the one hand; and also conflict between the everyday lives of the rural and their inscribed spatial practices. These conflicting positions can be analyzed using Halfacree's (2007) three-fold model as shown below:

Halfacree's (2007) theoretical position in the conceptualization of rural spaces encapsulates three interrelated facets: (1) Rural localities- this refers to 'inscribed spatial practices', linked production or consumption; material dimension of social activity and interaction; activities; and networks; (2) formal representations of the rural. This refers to how the rural is framed by governments/development agencies; it also refers to order, discourses, and speech; and (3) everyday lives of the rural, referring to processes of signification. This third dimension of rural space is related to the lived experience and imagination. Halfacree (2007) contends that rural space is a 'socially produced set of manifolds', connected to a 'huge range of spatial imaginaries'. According to him, space has a material dimension; it is actively produced, reproduced and transformed by practices and actions of actors. In addition, space is both an outcome of social processes, and at the same time a means of production. Most notably he contends that, space is more than just material; it is also imaginative, as well as symbolic in meanings. These facets can be employed and situated in the context of rural Ikondokondo in order to understand how differences in perceptions, framing and definitions of rural places could perhaps produce conflicting and sometimes contradictory positions by the actors over nature conservation policies.

It is worth mentioning that prior to the introduction of the resettlement programme the three facets of rural Ikondokondo were congruent to one another. This is to say the formal representations of the rural coincided with the everyday lives of the rural, which also coincided with local peoples' inscribed spatial practices. For

example, rural Ikondokondo was framed as a local forest community, with farming, fishing and hunting as its principal economic activities. This framing was in conformity with the imaginative space of the rural-perceiving livelihood options as anchored in their immediate environment- in this case the forest. Thus, it was a norm for community people to see the forest as a source of their livelihoods. This in a way greatly shaped their practices- for example, practicing agriculture, doing fishing and hunting, and also collect non-timber forest products (NTFPs) from the forest. The diagram below (Fig.1) is an illustration of how these three facets are in congruency with one another. However, the mutual conformity within and between these faces did not last forever because of changes in the formal representation. The analysis below explains how changes in formal representation (in favour of community resettlement) led to a shift from congruency to situations of conflict and/oppositions.

Fig.5 Below illustrates Halfacree's (2007) three-fold model in congruency:



4.10 Shifts from Congruency to Incongruence to Conflicts

In the 1980s, environmental conservation bodies noticed that a large part of the Amazon forest was experiencing a decline in terms of the amount of forest cover, coupled with loss of both plant and animal species. This called for the concern of

the World Bank and its development allies to re-think ways on how to reverse these trends especially as some plants and animal species were already on the brink of extinction. This fear raised by development agencies became more alarming in the advent of increasing climatic changes and variability, which was already dramatically affecting soils and water availability as well as agricultural productivity among many communities in sub-Saharan Africa, including the community under study. Consequently, because Cameroon's forest is part of the Amazon forest area, the policies advocated by these development agencies also had to be applicable to Cameroon. Thus it was interesting to see how global challenges affect or impinge on local processes- as experienced within the context of rural Ikondokondo. One of such global policies was to create National Parks within local forest communities at national levels.

By advocating for the creation of national parks, this implicitly meant that, the formal representation of the rural space has to change its focus towards an approach, which requires local people to distance themselves from certain zones called 'Protected Areas'. That is, the human-nature interaction was no longer seen as necessary in shaping the forest. As if this constriction of 'community's rural space' was not enough, these communities were further required to move to new locations. Such forceful relocation of local populations inadvertently poses severe consequences on the everyday lives of the rural as well as on their locally inscribed practices. For instance, some rural inhabitants loss their sense of place, or the image they had of the rural as a place full of meaning, values, norms and beliefs which help to shape them and reinforce community spirit, practices and interactions. Most worryingly, some of them could no longer practice extensive agricultural because of the limited land apportioned to them. Hence their practices were also curtailed.

Consequently, it will be fair to say that, they were not only deprived from a resource which defined their life-chances, but were also required to rebuild a new community life, with new forms of social and economic organizations. Thus, this form of development intervention signaled significant changes in the ways in which

rural spaces were beginning to be framed. As mentioned above, with the dwindling of the Amazon forest resources, coupled with the impacts of climate change, the state of Cameroon adopted this approach of community resettlement, which greatly minimized the survival chances of many rural communities in Cameroon, including the rural community of Ikondokondo village in the South-west province of Cameroon. Such an approach in itself constituted the corner stone of conflicts within community's life-worlds and between community people and development agencies as explained in Halfacree's model.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENATIONS

5.0 Introduction

In an attempt to reverse the continuous trend of forest destruction around the Korup forest area of southwest Cameroon, the Korup National park was born in 1988. The entire plan towards the establishment of this park was initiated by the WWF, with the support of the government of Cameroon. The debates and discussions on community resettlement of some 6-7 villages started in 1986. After a series of debates and deliberations, it was decided that the village of Ikondokondo be resettled. The resettlement of this village was supposed to be used as a pilot study. In 1991, the first group was resettled (Schmidt-Soltau, 1999). The project agreed to provide compensations to all resettled peoples.

Although the resettlement programme was claimed to be 'voluntary', its practical implementation showed that it was 'involuntary'. For instance, during one of the workshops on resettlement, the speech of the Senior Divisional Officer for Ndian, clearly exposed the authoritative and top-down nature of the resettlement programme. The officer posits: *'It is true that a forest reserve cannot be said to be conserved if it is inhabited by people who, in their effort to eke out a living, are bound to carry out activities that destroy what we want to preserve. That is therefore the reason why it has been found necessary to displace the population of the villages presently situated within the park to a new site considerably removed from the park' (Korup 1991:2 cited in Schmidt- Soltau, 1999*).

The SDO's statement above is clearly in support of the Cameroon law (1994) governing conservation and forest protection of National Parks. This law states that people are not allowed to live or hunt within the boundaries of the national park (Law 81-13 of 1994). Consequently, local community peoples of Ikondokondo were left with no option than to abide to the projects compulsory resettlement. The Korup project promised to provide free housing, better roads, improved medical and health facilities; access to pipe borne water; schools; access to arable lands;

free extension workers, free labour, free seedlings, as well as other financial and technical compensations. Like most other development projects in Cameroon, most of these compensations were never provided. Even in instances where they were allocated, because of corruption and the lack of any effective system of monitoring, compensation pages never reached the intended beneficiaries. Their living conditions became even more precarious especially as the new settlement site offer very little possibility to sustain livelihoods. Consequently, resettlement made life more difficult for the people. Apart from losing their right of access to forest resources, they also suffered from material and spiritual loses.

Interestingly, the disconnection created by community resettlement signaled the end of some traditional agro-ecological management practices previously undertaken by local people living in the Korup forest area. Practices, which promotes forest regeneration, guard against bush fires and enhances the porosity of the soil, could no longer go operational after resettlement. This is because, local peoples now appear alien to the forest. Hence, they therefore see no need to encourage their preservation. On the contrary, there has been massive expansion of the timber trade. The destructive activities of these logging companies go far beyond what was caused by those local peasants of Ikondokondo village.

By dissociating community people from forest resources; and coupled with the failed promises made by the Korup project, local inhabitants of Ikondokondo have been pushed to a tight corner. Most at times, these local people are unable to afford their basic needs. For over 10 years now, they have been suffering from serious food insecurity. The patches of land provided to them for agriculture are not suitable for the type of crops they want to cultivate. As a means of survival, these people now consume certain tubers, which in the past were allocated to their animals. Like one elder commented:

> *'…..we are suffering from serious hunger… In the past when we were living in the former site of Ikondokondo, we were very poor, but at least we had food to eat…. We grew many tubers and never complained of hunger…..… But here at this present site, we are more than poor…. We do not have money to buy food and other items from Mundemba*

market….Besides, the things from Mundemba are very expensive…..We thought that when Korup resettles us, they will help us to live a better life… but that is not true…..

'….My family and I have never been this hungry…. Sometimes we eat Akwana which in the past, was used as food for pigs……'

In the guest for food of these forest dwellers are now heavily involved in illegal poaching of not only small animals (like in the past), but also bigger species both for home consumption as well as for the market. Moreover, compared to the past, they have intensified their hunting activities and in most cases often encounter violent conflict with game guards and Korup officials. Irrespective of all efforts that these people are making to guarantee their survival, they still find it extremely difficult to free themselves from the 'resettlement trap' after some 13 years since their resettlement. Local peoples complained that since the end of the project, they have been completely abandoned by the project. Even the 'modern houses' which the project provided out of their wish, are experiencing serious dilapidation. These local peoples have made numerous appeals to the government of Cameroon, requesting for intervention, but all they receive is deaf ears from government officials. In one of our group meetings, a member of the chief council made this sorrowful remark:

……We do not know the crime we have committed. We did not ask the government for resettlement. They government forcefully threw us out of the land of our ancestors. They wanted to protect the forest… Looking at the forest, it is not better than it was….some parts of it have been destroyed completely by timber exploiters…..The forest belongs to us, but we are not benefiting anything……. Who are they preserving this forest for? Politicians and business people who come from outside? These people do more harm to our forest…. Since Korup came, we have never had peace…. We are now like abandon children…. Not even our government care about us…'

The above statements represents crystal indication that local persons of Ikondokondo no longer have control over the forest- a resource which defines that livelihood chances because top-down colonialists policies have denied them their tenurial rights over access. In this respect, local inhabitants have lost grip over the quality of their forest. The inability of local people to exercise control over the forest also negatively affects its use. Looking at the above statement the other way round, local peoples' ability to exercise control over the forest positively affects its use. Like many researchers would argue, vegetation acquires values through human

action (*cf* Fairhead and Leach, 1996). In other words, there is a very high degree of interdependence between local people and forest resources. That is, nature defines the live chances of these people, who in turn shape and create nature. Accordingly, local peoples' everyday lives and realities can better be understood by situating their activities and practices within the broader environment in which they live. Clement Stone once corroborated this viewpoint when he argued 'man is the product of his environment'.

Thus, in order to understand the practices, everyday lives and social realities of these people, sociologist and anthropologist would argue that we need to situate them within the broader context of their socio-cultural environment- in this case, exploring the linkages between forest resources and the livelihood patterns (see, Leach and Fairhead, 1996). Consequently, there is urgent need for policy makers, conservationists and development agencies to seriously reconsider the different ways through which top-down conservation and/or development policies should be implemented. Leach and Fairhead (2000) have rightfully argued against what they called 'received wisdoms'- advocating for intervention approaches, which thoroughly explore the inter-linkages between people and forest resources. Just like with the Ikondokondo case, Fairhead and Leach (1996) further contends that the development of forest Islands are the product of everyday life and management of local inhabitants. Hence failure to adequately comprehend and incorporate the roles that local peoples play in sustaining the forest, would imply that conservation and/ or development policies will be hopping on one leg, while encountering serious challenges in the course of their implementation.

5.1 Towards a people-centered approach to forest conservation

The last three decades there has recorded considerable reduction in the number of plants and animal species in Cameroon's ecologically rich Korup forest area. Ichikawa (2006) has argued that an inestimable wealth of flora and fauna species in this forest have been lost mainly due to the logging operations conducted by national and multinational lumbering companies. Ironically, colonial and post-

colonial ecologists and policy makers, including a host of conservation agencies have attributed this loss to destructive nature of local community people. Consequently, policy makers and authorities concerned have since then instituted draconian measures to help regulate the use of forest resources within the Korup forest reserve. These policy makers have equally under-estimated and failed to understand that the dynamics which have been occurring in the forest owe much to long term historical interactions between people and forest. On the one hand, outsiders'(mostly conservation bodies, ecologists, policy makers, government officials) observation of the forest and its local management practices have been influenced by theories of vegetation change which did not allow the significance of local practices to be appreciated. Their perceptions were, in many respects a logical consequence of their adherence to the idea of 'original' vegetation- a climatic climax- in which all vegetation change constituted divergence from an undisturbed optimum (Fairhead and Leach, 1996).

On the other hand, the daily-life activities of villagers of Ikondokondo forest, as well as their different agro-ecological management endeavours, as described above, have greatly contributed in enhancing the vegetation type and density in and around the Korup forest areas (*cf* Sharpe, 1998; see also Fairhead and Leach 1996 in the Kissidougou case). Hence the local agro-management practices of these villagers (especially the planting of fruit trees, the cultivation of crops, and the rearing of animals) have continuously served as testimonies on the roles of humans in enhancing the vegetation cover in the Korup forest area.

In the course of the field research, local inhabitants of Ikondokondo village expressed succinctly their encounters in the forest as well as the challenges they faced on daily basis. They equally presented their contributions to the survival and development of the forest, which unfortunately, could not be appreciated by conservationists. The statements presented underneath reflect some of the arguments presented by local populations of Ikondokondo village. The statements greatly capture the differences in perceptions between 'insiders' (local inhabitants

of Korup forest area) and 'outsider' (Korup officials, conservation agencies and policy makers).

> *'……The Korup people say we are destroying the forest……. They say that we kill the animals and do not allow the plants to grow tall. …..It is true that we go into the forest and do hunting of very small animals. But the timber companies cause more destruction. They destroy very big trees which have lived for hundreds of years…..We also plant crops in the forest and harvest some forest vegetables. Our ancestors have been living like this since they came to this land. But what annoys us most is that the government and the Korup officials have failed to look at our own contribution to the forest. We plant trees like mangoes, plums, pearl, and coffee. These trees also add to the forest and make it bigger. We also collect dried branches of trees……., if we leave this dried branches of trees, it may be dangerous to the forest in case of any fire outbreak during the dry season…..'*

Consequently, considering the invaluable contributions that forest dwellers provide in enhancing forest growth and regeneration, it is of great imperativeness for conservationists, ecologists and policy makers to reconsider conservation approaches to development. Whatever be the nature of conservation policies, the interests and survival of local inhabitants should be taken into consideration. That is to say, forest growth and regeneration is inherent in forest use. As such, the people-forest relationship should be sufficiently explored and acknowledge. This is because these forest peoples are highly aware of the ecological processes and forest dynamics occurring within forest areas (*cf* Fairhead and Leach, 1996). Their everyday lives and activities contributed significantly in shaping the vegetation cover, in this case the Korup forest area, although resettlement scheme failed to acknowledge these. There, the emergence of any subsequent nature conservation programme should be able to take into consideration local realities before designing conservation policies.

5.2 Recommendations

The discussions above enable us to understand the impacts on society and nature, when people are disconnected from their resource- in this case the forest, the main source of their livelihoods. The field research shows that it is but obvious that the top-down approach adopted by the Korup project to resettle the people of Ikondokondo village was perhaps not the best decision and so requires revision. Interviews with respondents reveal how the Korup project, including the Cameroon

government make unfulfilled promises. In the absence of shock absorbers and safety nets, community resettlement of the population of Ikondokondo village have since then instigated untold suffering, misery and generalized poverty among the people. Even today, the living conditions of the resettled people continue to be a horrible experience. The project did not only fail to provide social safety nets, but also failed to put in place any effective system of monitoring and accountability. Consequently, the project's ambition to enhance forest conservation while satisfying the imperatives of local development could never have been reached. Instead the angry masses of rural Ikondokondo have tended to be unfriendly with the forest and currently, are heavily embarking in unruly ways to receive what they assume has been traditionally theirs- the forests and its resources. Thus any subsequent resettlement programme that seeks to simultaneously create a balance between conservation of forest resources and satisfying the imperatives of local development should take into consideration the following suggestions:

First and foremost, forest conservation policies should carefully consider the roles of local or traditional knowledge in forest resource management. That is conservation policies should be able to appreciate and support local initiatives carried out by rural farmers in their different localities. This local knowledge should be carefully studied and promoted. Through this way, local people would also develop some feelings of 'belonging' in the design, planning and implementation of conservation and development projects. Hence they will be able to offer their full support towards the successful applications of such policies. These people have agency and will like to see themselves exercising their agency, acting pro-actively in shaping and designing their own environment, rather than been seen as passive victims, poor with no knowledge of conservation (Sharpe, 1998b)

Second, given that these rural people rely on agriculture as their main activity, projects designers and planners should make available arable land, in order to enhance agricultural productivity. Local people should be encouraged to grow food

and cash crops, and also to raise domestic animals. Their engagement in crop production will enable them meet up with some of their dietary needs. Food crop production will also keep them busy, and engage less into the forest. Similarly, local inhabitants should be encouraged to raise domestic animals. The production of animals will hopefully reduce their over dependence on bush-meat as a source of animal protein. Unfortunately for the Korup project, it failed to put in place alternative sources of livelihood such as the rearing of animals. Moreover, the importance of 'land' to forest dwellers cannot be over emphasized. Hence, forest conservation policies must incorporate the possibility of conserving plants and animal species by allocating forest lands to villagers as traditional and sacred lands. In the case of Ikondokondo, villagers marked out certain portions of the forest, which were often used to perform certain traditions and rituals. Thus, even in conservation policies, these patches of lands should be mapped out and given recognition as 'culturally protected areas' (*cf* Sharpe 1998a).

Third, approaches to nature conservation should be able to offer priority to realizing the co-existence that exists between human beings and forest resources as observed in rural Ikondokondo. Instead of up-rooting forest dwellers, nature conservation policies should consider forest growth and regeneration as the product of everyday life and management activities of local populations. Fairhead and Leach (1996) have re-echoed this position when they contend that 'forest improvement is inherent in forest use'. Hence policy makers should be able to appreciate such interactions in the course of framing conservation policies.

Fourth, any subsequent resettlement programme should consider the availability of sufficient funds that will be required to resettle the entire population. The project should also put in place effective systems of accountability, monitoring and evaluation. With the availability of sufficient funds, coupled with well developed accountable and monitoring schemes, project planners are more likely to receive favourable outcomes at the end of the project. Without any positive outcomes, the objectives of resettlement can never be achieved since resettled people will always

go back to their places of origins, hoping to find better and happy life. And if they are forest communities, as with the Ikondokondo case, these people will still heavily depend on forest resources.

Fifth, there should exist clear and noble understanding among project planners, the government and the local people concerned. Moreover, each actor's right and obligations should be understood and observed. Agreements should also be consensual. Nature conservation policies tend to be more effective and fruitful when all parties involved are well informed of their rights and responsibilities. These were unfortunately absent in the Korup resettlement scheme. Consequently, there is no doubt that the outcomes of the Korup programme today, represent one of the worst-case scenarios on community resettlement.

In summary, the above recommendations represents a short list of approaches required by conservation agencies to put on their tables before designing policies which has (in)direct implications on peoples' livelihood chances. Whatever the nature and purpose of policies, the people, especially those who are (in)directly affected by such policies should be carefully considered. The extent to which such policies will succeed will also depend on the extent to which the peoples' livelihood chances have been taken into consideration. In essence, the greater the consideration given to local people in support of their livelihood options, the higher the degree of support that these same people will offer to conservation policies, and hence the greater the chances of such policies to be successful.

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