

Sena Oura National Park | Methods and Tools

Context

Sena Oura National Park is the result of a long process of reflection by the local population, who probably never dreamed that the action they had taken to protect their natural resources would lead to the creation of a national park.

Following the droughts of 1984 and 1993, the people of Mayo-Kebi, a region in the south-west of Chad on the border with Cameroon, faced a number of problems. Rivers and springs had dried up, gallery forest had been destroyed due to a lack of water and the production of charcoal, wildlife had been frightened off by poachers, bush fires were rife, there was pressure from farmers looking for arable land, and more livestock breeders had entered the area after being pushed further to the south by the droughts. So it was essential to find solutions to these problems.

A GIZ-assisted community-based natural resources management programme (*Programme sur la Gestion Conjointe des Ressources Naturelles*, PGCRN), proposed to the people in the villages and the canton that a study be conducted to identify needs. This evolved into a cantonal development scheme, which determined the areas used for planting and grazing, the corridors used for moving herds and the zones of interest as a source of wild game. The project benefited from the setting up of *local*



orientation and decision-making bodies (ILODs, 1997) to build local capacities. The ILODs are made up of locally elected representatives whose mandate is to ensure local development, and were formed in preparation for the expected decentralised structures. These ILODs drew up a series of local agreements, charters and development plans that led to the park being set up.

The park was created in 2010 by *Law 16*, through which the state gave official status to the protection already initiated by the population.

The park is the result of local management of natural resources and environmental protection, and is also the fruit of collective action towards democratic development.

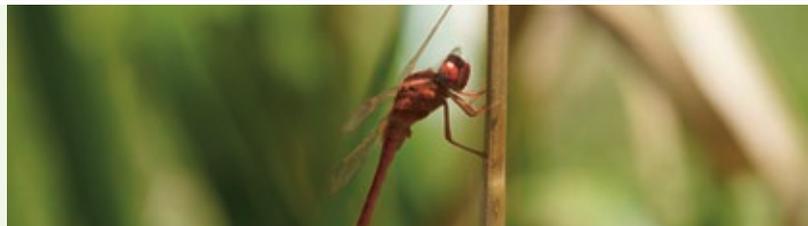
Stakeholders

a. The population

The local people, who are the primary stakeholders with regard to the park, recognised the importance of identifying its status and deciding how they wanted to manage the park territory.

The *Programme for Decentralised Rural Development* (PDRD) fostered a participatory approach and made sure throughout the process that the people kept control by means of agreements, charters and *local development plans* (LDPs), such as the *local agreement of Dari* (1995), which protects the gallery forests surrounding the village. The official request for the creation of the park was made after 10 years of development and as a result of a meeting of all the village chiefs from the two cantons, the canton chiefs, representatives of local associations and the state's technical services departments.

The *Sena Oura Park project* received continual support from regional members of parliament and the local people, who overcame administrative obstacles and a prevailing atmosphere of mistrust.



b. The ILODs

The ILOD is the first body set up by the local people in connection with the management of natural resources. The activities financed by PCGRN enabled the ILOD and the local people to adopt the inter-community charter for natural resource management (2002). An application submitted by two cantons to the *Ministry of the Environment* to have a piece of land where game was plentiful declared a protected area led GIZ and *French cooperation* to launch a programme to draw up a wildlife inventory.

In 2007, *ILOD Dari* was awarded a two-year project that aimed to help classify and manage the Sena Oura area. Measures were developed to cooperate with the transboundary *Bouba Ndjidda park* in Cameroon, and led to an application by the people to class the area as a national park under *Law 14 (forest, fauna and fishery resources)*. This law passed in 2008 allows partial management of protected areas by the local people. It defines the conditions required to create a national park at the people's request.



c. Executing agencies

Support by traditional chiefs played an important role in the entire issue of protecting natural resources. The involvement of chiefs made it possible to mobilise the people on this issue. In close cooperation with the ILODs, they worked together with the donors and the state.

The decentralised authorities were able to support the process of reflection by the local people. In addition, the passing of *Law 14* led to the creation of a national park. The state's technical services are going to prepare a draft law that will be submitted to the people, the cabinet and members of parliament.

A number of projects and donors are involved in managing the natural resources of Sena Oura and in developing the park, for

example GIZ, first through the PGCRN, then through the PDRD, in cooperation with the *German Development Service (DED)* and *KfW, French cooperation*, and the *Global Environment Facility (GEF)*. All of the work can be carried out by local service providers, who always cooperate closely with the ILODs.

Activities

The first activities were conducted by the local people. After they had shown their interest, first the village then the cantonal needs were identified. Persistent work by the population and traditional chiefs led to the drafting of the first local agreements.

The subsequent local agreements and charters describe the territory and the local population, identify problems and define solutions. These solutions take the form of documents signed by all stakeholders. The documents envisage management structures and their respective responsibilities, as well as the regulations and sanctions and how to apply these. These initial documents encourage the people to manage their resources.

Each of these structures acts at its own level, and the following stage involves expanding the mandate and scope of the previous agreement or charter. Visits to *Boudda Ndjidda National Park* in Cameroon and to Garoua enable fruitful exchanges on the possibilities offered by the legal status of such a national park. Exchanges between technical service departments and the people make it possible to draw up a work schedule that ensures the park's development.

Another important element in the process of creating the park was to think about ways to increase income from tourism. The Cameroonian example doubtlessly helped to promote this move. However, a lack of appropriate infrastructure and clearly defined policies in this area has put a damper on the people's hopes.

Apart from all the state apparatus required to draft and pass a law, the activities undertaken made it possible to cover the management of natural resources, set up the responsible local organisations, conduct studies on possibilities for developing regional tourism, promoted transborder exchanges on environmental issues and developed advocacy activities vis-à-vis local and national authorities and policy-makers.

The people were also asked for their views on the wording of the law and will be invited to participate in the park's management.

The PDRD supported the activities envisaged by the population. Like the local members of parliament, it interceded with



policy-makers and administrative officers to promote the park and its benefits. The approach is growing in influence and activities are making themselves felt. Sometimes this conflicts with the action taken by the authorities, such as that of driving people off the land without compensation. In this case, people have left the park territory of their own volition, accepting the consequences of their own decisions.



Products and their use

- Training of the population on environmental protection and improving agricultural production;
- Capacity development for the local people in the context of defining the local development plan, charters and agreements;
- Strengthening the capacity of the local people to take on long-term community action;
- Setting up ILODs to coordinate activities and make sure they have gained the people's trust;
- Since the creation of Sena Oura National Park was a first, the knowledge and experience gained by the actors involved are unique;
- At a strategic level, the creation of a transboundary park enhances its importance and serves as an international example.

Direct results

- A national park that protects natural resources with a surface area of more than 73,000 ha;
- A national park created at the request of the people;
- A regional development plan established in agreement with the people;
- 20% of direct income from the park goes to the people;
- People have left the park territory of their own free will without asking for compensation;
- The upholding of certain rights of use;

- A reduction in conflicts between farmers;
- Inventories of fauna and flora;
- A transition zone and a peripheral zone to protect the park.

Monitoring and evaluation

PDRD and its sub-programme, PRODALKA, closely follow up all activities related to charters, agreements and local development plans. Growing public interest in the protection of natural resources obliges the projects to innovate and adapt to the people's thoughts and wishes.

All charters, agreements and local development plans are monitored and updated, and normally apply for a period of five years. Even before its creation, a census was taken of the fauna, vegetation and birdlife of *Sena Oura National Park*. Auditing the zones protected by these tools makes it possible for the local people to recognise their advantages and disadvantages.

A regional development plan was drawn up starting in 2009 and workshops were held on the five following issues:

- community development;
- management of the ecosystem;
- ecotourism;
- management of park operations;
- pastoralism.

The creation of the park is truly innovative and points to an approach that will need to be evaluated in the long term as regards the management of natural resources, the effects on the neighbouring population and, above all, the involvement of the local people in the life of the park.

Scaling up

The park is basically an area that enjoys state protection via a specific law, whereas the area was formerly only protected by local charters and agreements. The recognition of popular wishes is an important gesture in a country that still does not have enough parks.

Exchanges with Cameroon offer prospects for creating a transboundary park in years to come. In as far as the local people remain involved in decision-making, this approach would have the advantage of increasing the park's impact on the region's natural resources (fauna and flora).

The new *Laws 14 and 16* are innovative because they allow the local people to initiate environmental protection activities.



Environmental impact

Over 15 years ago, people in the region had already noted the progressive degradation of their environment and land desertification. The action taken since then has definitely slowed the advance of desertification, but pressure on the environment continues to exist. The action taken to protect the zones covered by the agreements and charters, then by the park itself, shows that environmental problems are anchored in the local mentality, if only because environmental protection has enabled all the people to live better lives.

Sena Oura National Park is an example to the people of Chad, but work to protect the environment must not be limited to the park. It should be carried out at all levels and in all regions.

Constraints

These are numerous – they begin with a situation where the managers of the state park, i.e. the people, cannot enjoy all of the hoped-for advantages, despite being theoretically invited to participate in the park's management. Will management of the park be as participatory as the process that created it? Many people are convinced this will be the case.

The development plan envisaged that 50% of the park's income would go to the people. However, the law states a figure of 20%, which reduces the people's income. The risk for the park's managers is that some people will lose interest due to this decision by the legislator. It should be noted that this is an innovative experience for the state.

Tourism is often seen as a panacea and is too frequently perceived as a quick and easy source of income. However, this economic



activity calls for development policy input: promoting the country and its advantages, road infrastructure, hotels etc.

The park might also create jobs by employing village inhabitants as conservation officers. However, the people who have been obliged to give up their land might decide to reclaim 'their' park by gradually resuming traditional economic activities, in cases where social pressure may have diminished.

Another constraint concerns monitoring and maintenance. The primary actors with regard to the park are those who suggested that it be set up in the first place. They have received supplementary training that enables them to better understand and manage their land. New projects are set to take over from PDRD in connection with the park's management. It is to be hoped that these interventions will not raise expectations that are detrimental to the approaches that have been developed and based on collective autonomy.

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