

**Improving livelihoods and mitigating human-elephant conflict in northern
Republic of Congo (Likouala) through agroforestry and beekeeping**

Project progress report from 14 Jun to 10 July

**Executed by the Youth Association for Education to the safeguard of Elephant in Congo
(AJESEC)**



**Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development**

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Introduction

Central Africa's elephants have been severely affected by ivory poaching over the past ten years (CITES, 2015b; Maisels, Strindberg et al., 2013b; UNEP et al., 2013; Wittemyer et al., 2014). In the Republic of Congo, the poaching threatens forest elephants population (IUCN Report 2016)

Unprotected areas are the extension of protected areas and both habitats attract seasonally many endangered animal species such as forest elephants (*Loxodonta cyclotis*). In fact, to satisfy their daily needs, the elephants are obliged to move periodically between protected and unprotected areas to visit trees species carrying ripe fruits. Doing so, elephants are exposed daily to poachers. These poachers have not alternative activities, which provide them money and can therefore be easily used by ivory traffickers.

This situation is alarming as more and more local expert hunters are killing elephants to alleviate poverty. The youth association for education to the safeguard of elephants in Congo (AJSEC) had initiated a local development project **for 3 years**, which employs many expert hunters. This long term's project will have direct benefit to the entire local community. The project plans are to grow crops, forest trees and beehives on 5ha of agricultural land (50000m²). To achieve the project goal, the financial support of the German Government and the Jana Robeyst Trust fund were essential for the materials, transport and salary of local staff respectively. The first step of this project cover the period of 15 Jun to 10 July 2019.

In the following pages, detail information about the transport of equipment, the meeting with the village chief, the selection of the young men and the first activities such as camp set up in the forest will be described.

1. Transport of equipment and crop seeds

To reach the Likouala region and particularly the village of Thanry, where the project activities must be carried out, we used a Toyota Hilux 4x4. It was a perfect transportation car because Thanry is situated in a very remote area around 1010 km from Brazzaville. To transport the project equipment and materials from Brazzaville to Thanry, we also needed a Police travel's authorization.

This car allowed us to carry the priority equipment's such as:

- Wheelbarrows
- Shovels, hoes, rakes, and machetes
- Chainsaw
- Crops seeds, tubers and young plants (avocados, mangos, oranges and others)
- Solar panel and battery
- Boat engine



On the 14th of June, we contacted the car owner and on the 15th we obtained the car documents. These documents were necessary to obtain the police authorization to travel safely for the long distances.



Young man Guma comes to take the equipment out of the car.

We obtained this travelling authorisation on the 18th. There are many police station along the road between Brazzaville and Thanry and the traveling authorization will allow the car to travel safely without being stopping by police men along the road. Thereafter, we left Brazzaville directly to Ouessou, we stayed the night and then travelled to Thanry the next day. we arrived at Thanry the 19th.

2. Meeting with the chief of the village

On the 20th June, the first meeting with the people responsible for the village were organized.

We first met the landowner who is also the chief of the village.

The goal of this first meeting was to make the chief and its mainly collaborators aware about the crucial importance of the project for the benefit of all people from the village and particularly for the young hunters. For example: Young hunters will be employed and learn new methods to grow crops and manage beehives. They will learn about the diversity of species which will be grown and the specific methods used to increase the production. The women will be employed to harvest the crops and to sell the exceeding of harvest to nearby towns (Pokola, Dongou, Impfondo, Ouesso).

Additionally, we emphasized on the urgency and the fundamental need to protect forest elephants and enhance biodiversity. For example, we talk about the ecological value of forest elephant for the forest regeneration. Thereafter, we provide them some printed and laminated pictures of elephants and others animals.



At the end of the meeting with the chief of village and his closes associates. The chief with green T-shirt.

3. Selection of young hunters

At the end of the meeting, we asked the chief of the village to select 15 young men, 9 Bayaka (indigenous or foragers) and 6 Bantous (farmers). This selection is based on specific criteria such as: courageous, good knowledge of the forest (knowing trees species useful for elephants, knowing fruit availability season). Therefore, training and working with these young men will allow us to collect more detailed information about poaching around this area. These information will allow us to define a new strategy through awareness and present agroforestry activities as new alternative opportunity to have money and food.



One part of the men employed for the project holding machetes.

The majority of the men are involved in elephant poaching in all the villages due to poverty and lack of education. This is why, the project plans to give these men a new perception of life and give them hope to have a better future through agroforestry, and at the same time protect elephants.



Another group of hunters is digging the well for water near the camp

4. Project's first activities

Trees species identification

The identification of trees species in the area is very crucial because we have the responsibility to protect all trees species that produce fruits consumed by elephants and humans.

Preparing the land and constructing the house



Constructing a temporary house



Testing the soil PH



The men prepare themselves for cutting the shrubs and prepare the land for agriculture

Prepare the beehives



Preparation of the beehives

Plant the first tubers and fruit trees



Project leader Vidrige Kandza shows the men how to dig and prepare the land for plantation of tubers.



Plants brought from Brazzaville for planting in Thanry: from top left to right then bottom left to right: safoutier, corosolier, oranger, manguier.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The first part of the project (cleaning the land) will be finalised at the end of July. The next step will be the beehives installation and planting (all crops and the rest of trees species) between August and September. First harvest of tomatoes and vegetable will be in October. Thereafter, the harvest of different crops species will be continuous between December 2019 until December 2020. But the harvest of different fruits species will start around September 2020 until 2030.



The harvest of manioc in June 2019. We planted a small garden for Bayaka families in August 2018.

Acknowledgment

We would also like to thank the German government (The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) and the German Embassy in Brazzaville for supporting this big project. Your financial support helps us to continue our mission of providing alternative activity to the hunters.

We would like to thank The JANA ROBEYST TRUST FUND for their financial support. The funds were used to transport the material from Brazzaville to Thanry and as salaries for the local hunters during the first period of the project. Thank you again for supporting this project.

References

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