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COUNTRY BRIEF

CAMEROON

AFRICAN WILDLIFE INITIATIVE

KEEP NATURE STANDING

IUCN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cameroon hosts rich biodiversity that stretches across its savannahs, forests, and freshwater ecosystems, supporting over 9,000 plant species, 900 bird species, and nearly 300 mammal species, including iconic and endangered animals like forest elephants, western lowland gorillas, chimpanzees, lions, and manatees. The country has established over 20 protected areas (national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and reserves) to safeguard this natural heritage in areas such as **Bénoué National Park** (NP), the **Tchabal Mbabo National Park** (NP), the **Mpem-Djim National Park** (NP) and the **Lake Ossa Wildlife Reserve**, sites where IUCN SOS African Wildlife conservation supported conservation action.

These areas face significant threats and increasing pressure from poaching, habitat destruction, illegal mining, and human-wildlife conflict, which have led to the decline of key species, habitat degradation, and loss of livestock, thus necessitating urgent conservation interventions.

Through the support of the IUCN SOS African Wildlife Initiative, four projects in some of Cameroon's key conservation areas were implemented to mitigate these threats.

- In the **Bénoué NP**, a project was implemented to safeguard the Kordofan giraffe integrated law enforcement and monitoring strategies using SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) technology to enhance patrol efficiency. Improved patrol efficiency and infrastructure upgrades led to a 50% reduction in illegal activities within two years in the park.
- In the **Tchabal Mbabo NP**, a project aimed at assessing threats facing the leopard population was undertaken using biological surveys and camera trapping. The project's impact renewed government interest in designating Tchabal Mbabo as a national park, emphasising the importance of community participation, scientific methodologies, and strategic awareness campaigns in species conservation.
- In the **Mpem-Djim NP**, a lion conservation project sought to protect the critically endangered lion population through a combination of anti-poaching patrols, human-wildlife conflict mitigation, and biodiversity monitoring. Strategies such as the construction of demonstration bomas—enclosures designed to protect livestock from predators, reduced livestock depredation by 80-95%, from 80-90 cows killed per month to just one within a year of the project —helped foster positive attitudes toward lion conservation among local communities and demonstrated that addressing human-wildlife conflict is essential for ensuring coexistence and long-term conservation success.

Over
9,000
plant species

900
bird species

Nearly
300
mammal species

- Efforts to restore **Lake Ossa's** ecosystem were supported by a project focusing on the biological control of *Salvinia molesta*, a fast-spreading aquatic fern that threatens the African manatee's habitat. The project introduced the *Cyrtobagous salviniae* weevil as a biological control agent complemented by the manual removal of *Salvinia sp* and the implementation of alternative livelihood programmes for local communities. These interventions helped reduce manatee hunting and serve as a model for the biological control of invasive species in Cameroon.

Photo credit: © African Marine Mammal Conservation Organization

To sustain and enhance these conservation efforts, several strategic actions are recommended.

- Expand the use of Spatial Monitoring and Reporting (SMART) technology for patrols and training rangers in protected areas to improve monitoring and enforcement of conservation laws.
- Invest in infrastructure development, particularly road rehabilitation in key conservation zones, to further strengthen the effectiveness of anti-poaching operations and research activities.

- Increase funding for community education programmes to foster greater local involvement in conservation, reduce illegal activities and human-wildlife conflict.
- Strengthen law enforcement in critical conservation areas such as with a focus on preventing poaching and strengthening protected area status.
- Expand sustainable livelihood programmes, particularly those that offer viable alternatives to illegal and unsustainable consumption, to reduce threats to wildlife and improve economic resilience for local communities.
- Expand the use of biological control measures across infested water bodies as an effective strategy for protecting aquatic biodiversity.
- Secure long-term funding and increase strategic partnerships with governmental, non-governmental, and international conservation organisations for long term sustainability of conservation gains.

By integrating cutting-edge technology, strong law enforcement, local community engagement, and innovative conservation solutions, these initiatives provide a blueprint for safeguarding Cameroon's unique biodiversity. The lessons learned from these projects highlight the importance of collaboration, adaptive management, and sustainable funding in achieving lasting conservation impact.

"The lessons learned from these projects highlight the importance of collaboration, adaptive management, and sustainable funding in achieving lasting conservation impact."

THE IUCN SOS AFRICAN WILDLIFE INITIATIVE: SCALING CONSERVATION ACTION FOR THREATENED SPECIES

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) envisions "a just world that values and conserves nature." Its mission is to "influence, encourage, and assist societies worldwide to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable." As a global authority on biodiversity conservation, IUCN operates through an extensive network of over 10,000 species conservation experts who guide the development and implementation of its strategy. Through initiatives like Save Our Species (SOS), IUCN supports evidence-based conservation action, strengthens civil society organisations (CSOs), and helps implement biodiversity policies that benefit species, ecosystems, and people.

Photo credit: © Iris Kirsten

Africa is home to some of the world's most iconic yet increasingly threatened species, particularly large carnivores such as lions, cheetahs, leopards, African wild dogs, and Ethiopian wolves. These species face escalating threats due to habitat loss, poaching, human-wildlife conflict, and illegal wildlife trade. To address these challenges, the IUCN SOS African Wildlife Initiative was launched as a partnership between the European Union and IUCN. The initiative focuses on two primary objectives: strengthening CSOs working to protect biodiversity, species, and habitats and demonstrating the impact of conservation actions on threatened species and ecosystems, with a special focus on large carnivores.

The initiative operates through three core pillars.

- **Species conservation**, which involves monitoring and protecting wildlife populations while creating conditions for species to recover and recolonise their native habitats.

- **Habitat protection** that enhances protected area management, restores degraded ecosystems and tackles threats such as overgrazing and invasive species.
- **Community engagement** which ensures the participation of local communities in conservation action. Supporting communities to adopt alternative livelihoods like beekeeping, agroforestry, and ecotourism reduces communities' reliance on natural resources, while the promotion of coexistence measures supports the needs of those living near wildlife.

To achieve these goals, the initiative funds conservation actions that address human-wildlife conflict through community-based interventions, awareness campaigns, and compensation schemes. It also combats poaching and illegal wildlife trade via anti-poaching patrols, snare removal, and K9 detection units. Additionally, the initiative supports habitat restoration through afforestation, wildfire management, and sustainable pasture planning while strengthening law enforcement and policy advocacy to enhance species protection. Recognising the importance of local participation, it actively involves communities through capacity-building programs, conservation employment opportunities, and education initiatives.

Since its launch, the initiative has provided funding through three calls for proposals (2017, 2019, and 2021), offering two types of grants. Threatened Species Grants support long-term projects implementing a programmatic approach to addressing critical conservation threats, with funding ranging from €25,000 to €450,000 per grant and Rapid Action Grants offering short-term emergency response funding between €25,000 and €100,000 per grant. These grants have been instrumental in driving conservation action across Sub-Saharan Africa.

The IUCN SOS African Wildlife Initiative awarded 91 grants totalling €10.8 million to 91 civil society organisations, with 70% of grantees being national organisations. As a result:

- Approximately **40 million hectares** of key wildlife habitats have been placed under improved management.
- **37 action plans** have been developed or improved for better species protection.
- **30 projects** have mitigated human-wildlife conflict, fostering coexistence between wildlife and communities.
- Capacity-building efforts have trained **44,510 people** through workshops and policy events with **665,665 individuals** benefiting from direct employment and livelihood activities.
- **85% of grantees** reported improved organisational capacity, thereby strengthening conservation efforts across Africa.

The initiative has also helped amplify conservation awareness amongst the general public, with over **1,200 conservation stories** published across various platforms.

> The IUCN SOS African Wildlife Initiative strengthens civil society, protects threatened species and habitats, and empowers communities—placing 40 million hectares under improved management and reaching over 665,000 people through conservation-based livelihoods.

CAMEROON IN FOCUS

Cameroon, located in Central Africa, is renowned for its rich biodiversity and varied ecosystems, encompassing coastal regions, savannas, and dense forests. The country is home to numerous endemic and threatened species, making it a focal point for conservation efforts. As of 2024, Cameroon has 54 protected areas covering approximately 51,088 km², accounting for 10.99% of the nation's land area. These include 27 national parks, six natural sanctuaries, andsix6 nature reserves. Notable sites include the Dja Faunal Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its diverse primate populations, and the Sangha Trinational Reserve, a transboundary conservation area that protects species such as forest elephants and western lowland gorillas.

Photo credit: © African Marine Mammal Conservation Organization

The IUCN Save Our Species (SOS) African Wildlife initiative has played a crucial role in supporting conservation efforts in Cameroon. The initiative has awarded a total of **€350,367** through four grants to four civil society organisations (CSOs) in Cameroon with these efforts leading to the following outcomes;

1. Improved management of **801,480 hectares** of critical wildlife habitats.
2. A new policy aimed at gazetting the Tchaba Mbabo forest into a protected area has also been implemented to strengthen species protection.
3. Human-wildlife conflict has been actively addressed, in communities surrounding the Mpem-Djim National Park, promoting greater coexistence between wildlife and local communities as the introduction of conflict mitigation tools like the pilot boma reduced livestock depredation by 80-95%, from 80-90 cows killed per month to just one.
4. Capacity-building activities have trained **50 individuals** through targeted workshops, contributing to broader impacts with **4,908 people** engaged in conservation and sustainable livelihood initiatives.

The awarded grants from 2017 to present are as follows:

- Saving the Lions of Mpem-Djim National Park, which focuses on mitigating human-wildlife conflict to protect lion populations.
- Safeguarding Kordofan Giraffes in Bénoué National Park, which enhances patrols and data collection to improve conservation strategies.
- Assessing Leopard Populations in Tchabal Mbabo evaluated the status and threats facing leopards, while Saving the African Manatee's Habitat in Lake Ossa combated invasive species and preserved critical wetlands.
- Emergency control of *Salvinia molesta* aquatic fern to save the African manatee's habitat and lake Ossa's biodiversity

Despite ongoing conservation efforts, Cameroon faces several challenges, including habitat loss and degradation due to deforestation for agriculture, logging, and infrastructure development. Poaching and illegal wildlife trade also pose significant threats, particularly to elephants and pangolins. Additionally, human-wildlife conflict, especially between communities and species such as lions and elephants, affects both livelihoods and conservation efforts.

Overall, Cameroon's extraordinary biodiversity necessitates continued conservation efforts. Initiatives like IUCN Save Our Species remain essential in preserving the country's unique natural heritage for future generations.

"Initiatives like IUCN Save Our Species remain essential in preserving the country's unique natural heritage for future generations."

SOS AFRICAN WILDLIFE INITIATIVE ON THE GROUND ACTIONS IN CAMEROON

3.1 Safeguarding the heart of Kordofan giraffe territory in the North of Cameroon: A law enforcement and monitoring approach (2021 – 2023)

Implementation partner	Bristol, Clifton and West of England Zoological Society
Target species	Kordofan giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis antiquorum*) Critically Endangered
Project location	Bénoué National Park

PROBLEM

The Kordofan giraffe in Bénoué National Park faces critical threats from habitat degradation, poaching, and illegal activities such as gold mining, wood collection, and livestock grazing. With only 27 individuals remaining in the park, poaching of just two giraffes annually could lead to extinction within 15 years, highlighting the urgent need for conservation efforts. For instance, between 2018 and 2020, illegal activities within the park increased by 30%, resulting in a significant decline in biodiversity and disrupting the ecological balance of the area. Furthermore, limited infrastructure and resources hindered effective law enforcement and monitoring efforts.

APPROACH

Anti-poaching patrols were strengthened through the use of SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) technology, which were complemented by training workshops for eco-guards to enhance their effectiveness. Spatio-temporal data collection was also introduced to monitor illegal activity hotspots and optimise patrol strategies for more targeted interventions. To improve mobility within the park, 112 km of primary access roads were rehabilitated. Community engagement was

a key component, with local labour employed for road repairs to foster collaboration and ownership among community stakeholders. Capacity-building initiatives were also implemented, involving training sessions for park managers, eco-guards, and community researchers to equip them with essential conservation techniques.

KEY OUTCOMES

The project achieved significant results in its efforts to protect the Kordofan giraffe and its habitat.

- Illegal activities in Bénoué National Park decreased by 50%, as demonstrated by a decline in catch per unit effort from 0.31/km to 0.19/km and arrests per km from 0.218 to 0.104.
- The integration of SMART technology enhanced patrol efficiency by improving accountability, enabling data-driven planning, and facilitating effective threat monitoring.
- Infrastructure improvements, including the repaired roads, reduced travel time within the park and allowed for deeper patrol penetration, which contributed to more efficient conservation efforts, while the employment of local labour fostered collaboration and ownership.

The project's success was further recognised by the Cameroonian government during multiple site visits, highlighting its impact on biodiversity protection.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Several factors contributed to the success of this conservation project.

- The integration of SMART technology streamlined patrol operations and improved data analysis capabilities, making law enforcement efforts more effective.
- Collaboration with local communities, government agencies, and NGOs enhanced resource mobilisation and facilitated smooth project execution.
- Capacity-building workshops played a crucial role in equipping eco-guards and park managers with the skills needed for effective conservation practices.
- Infrastructure development, particularly road rehabilitation, improved access to remote areas of the park and bolstered law enforcement activities.

These combined efforts created a robust framework for protecting the Critically Endangered Kordofan giraffe and its habitat in Bénoué NP.

3.2 Assessment of status and existing threats to leopard populations (*Panthera pardus*) in Tchabal Mbabo, Cameroon (2020 – 2022)

Implementation partner	Cameroon Wildlife Conservation Society (CWCS)
Target species	Leopards (*Panthera pardus*) Vulnerable
Project location	Tchabal Mbabo area

PROBLEM

Leopard populations in Tchabal Mbabo are confronted with extensive habitat loss due to deforestation and slash-and-burn agricultural practices. Unsustainable hunting practices and the commercial bushmeat trade also contribute significantly to the threats faced by these animals. Furthermore, transhumance activities, marked by uncontrolled livestock grazing, lead to habitat degradation and increased human-wildlife conflict. The situation is exacerbated by the weak enforcement of existing legislative tools designed for species protection. The combination of these factors results in significant threats throughout the project area.

APPROACH

The project employed a multifaceted approach to evaluate the presence and population status of leopards in Tchabal Mbabo. Biological surveys, including recce walks, were conducted across approximately 60% of the project area to identify direct signs of the species, such as footprints or sightings. Camera traps were also deployed randomly over an 18-month period to capture images of wildlife. Community engagement was prioritised through guided interviews with former hunters and herders, who provided in-depth knowledge of wildlife dynamics in the region. Free Prior Informed Consent tools were utilised during meetings with indigenous Mbororo communities to ensure their participation and cooperation. Sensitisation meetings were held in villages to promote conservation values and educate local communities on the importance of wildlife protection and sustainable forest exploitation.

KEY OUTCOMES

Despite the absence of leopard images captured by camera traps, interviews with hunters and herders confirmed the species' presence in the area. Camera traps did, however, capture over 3,500 images of other mammalian fauna over 18 months, showcasing the area's rich biodiversity, including species such as the African civet, dwarf mongoose, white-mantled colobus, yellow-backed duiker, nandinia, baboon, genet, forest hog, and porcupine. Increased community awareness led to fewer encounters with poachers and a decline in bushmeat sales over time. The project also reignited government interest in designating Tchabal Mbabo as a national park, demonstrating that Tchabal Mbabo remained rich in mammalian fauna. Approximately 5,000 people attended village sensitisation meetings, which helped foster local support for conservation efforts.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Several factors contributed to the project's success.

- Community involvement was a critical factor, with the recruitment of 65 local porters and guides improving project implementation and fostering community buy-in. The policy of recruiting local personnel was crucial to the project's success.
- Awareness campaigns, through sensitisation meetings, improved perceptions of wildlife protection among locals.
- The use of modern tools like camera traps provided valuable data on species diversity and habitat conditions, emphasising that the combination of methodologies (recce walks, interviews, and camera trapping) is essential for studying elusive species like leopards.

3.3 Saving the lions of Mpem & Djim National Park in Cameroon (2019 – 2020)

Implementation partner	Biodiversité-Environnement et Développement Durable (BEDD)
Target species	Lion (*Panthera leo*) Vulnerable
Project location	Mpem et Djim National Park

PROBLEM

The project addressed critical threats to the lion population and its habitat in the Mpem-Djim National Park. These included high levels of poaching that affected both the lions and their prey base. Cattle encroachment inside and outside the park was degrading the habitat and increasing the risk of human-wildlife conflict. Human-livestock-carnivore conflict, particularly in the park's peripheral zones, resulted in livestock losses and retaliatory killings of lions. Additionally, inadequate knowledge among local villagers, pastoralists, and authorities regarding lion conservation and conflict mitigation strategies exacerbated these threats.

APPROACH

To tackle these challenges, the project adopted a multifaceted approach. Anti-poaching patrols were intensified by providing eco-guards with rations, materials, and training to enhance their presence and effectiveness. Biodiversity inventories were conducted to assess the prey base available for lions within the park. Community sensitisation efforts aimed to educate local communities, pastoralists, and authorities about lion conservation, conflict mitigation, and the importance of coexistence. Tools and strategies were provided to reduce human-wildlife conflict, including the construction of a demonstration boma (livestock enclosure). Lion identification and monitoring were carried out using methodologies such as interviews, track and sign monitoring, camera trapping, and calling stations to identify and monitor lion movement patterns.

KEY OUTCOMES

The project achieved several positive outcomes. Human-wildlife conflict was significantly reduced, with livestock attacks decreasing by 80-90% due to sensitisation efforts, boma construction, and human-carnivore mitigation sessions. Community acceptance of lions increased as a result of conflict reduction and sensitisation, enhancing the possibility of future coexistence. The local community now quickly shares sightings or signs of lions with the authorities, which helps reduce the reaction time to prevent conflicts. In the past, it often took several days to receive accurate information, but now the authorities get updates from the community on the same day. The enhanced presence of eco-guards and improved patrol effectiveness reduced human disturbances within the park with a 50% decreased in poaching incidence and cattle grazing within the park. Habitat quality improved due to reduced pressure from poaching and transhumance, increasing the suitable area for lions. Knowledge of wildlife and mitigation measures increased, improving the chances of coexistence between humans and lions in the region. Poaching and cattle encroachment were reduced from high to moderate intensity through increased park services capacity.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Several factors contributed to the project's success.

- Strong collaboration with the government was crucial, including participation in planning meetings and media reporting.
- The active engagement of local communities and pastoralists in sensitisation and conflict mitigation efforts was essential helped reduce human-wildlife conflict.
- Capacity building through training and equipping eco-guards enabled them to patrol and protect the park.
- Adaptive management, involving adjustments to strategies based on monitoring data and challenges encountered, such as the unsuccessful translocation attempt, allowed for flexible and effective implementation.

Photo credit: © Iris Kirsten

3.4 Emergency control of Salvinia molesta aquatic fern to save the African manatee's habitat and lake Ossa's biodiversity (2019 – 2020)

Implementation partner	African Marine Mammal Conservation Organisation
Target species	The African manatee (*Trichechus senegalensis*) Vulnerable
Project location	Lake Ossa

PROBLEM

Salvinia molesta, an invasive weed, has infested Lake Ossa, severely impacting the African manatee's habitat, hindering fishing activities, and disrupting navigation. The proliferation of this invasive species poses a significant threat to the lake's biodiversity and the socio-economic well-being of local communities.

APPROACH

The project's approach centred on biological control, using the *Cyrtobagous salviniae* weevil to eradicate *Salvinia molesta*. This involved importing weevils from the United States and establishing mass-rearing facilities in Cameroon. African Marine Mammal Conservation Organisation staff and conservation agents received training in weevil-rearing techniques. A risk analysis for biological control was conducted to ensure environmental safety. Local communities were sensitised on the impact and the benefits of the biological control approach. Following government authorisation, a pilot weevil release programme was initiated in a selected area of the lake. Complementary to the biological control efforts, the local community engaged in the manual removal of *Salvinia*. The project also integrated alternative livelihood training for local communities, including mushroom and snail farming and ecological charcoal production using *Salvinia* biomass. Baseline surveys were carried out to assess fisher perceptions, water quality, and manatee presence.

KEY OUTCOMES

The project achieved several important outcomes across biological control, community engagement, and sustainable livelihoods. A total of 950 *Salvinia*-eating weevils were imported, and more than 20,000 were successfully mass-reared to support the biological control of the invasive weed *Salvinia molesta*. In parallel, approximately 400 tons of *Salvinia* were manually removed through active participation of the local community. The project sensitised over 250 fishermen and reached more than 100,000 members of the public, highlighting the ecological and economic impacts of the weed. Although no direct or indirect sightings of manatees were recorded—likely due to the dense *Salvinia* cover—acoustic monitoring detected some manatee vocalisations, and faecal matter was occasionally observed. Community surveys further revealed that local fishermen recognised *Salvinia* as a harmful weed affecting

manatee habitats, fishing activities, and navigation, with estimated economic losses reaching approximately 18,600 XAF per fisherman per day. Twenty-five women and 25 fishermen were trained and equipped to engage in mushroom and snail farming, while 15 individuals received training and equipment to convert *Salvinia* into ecological charcoal, turning an environmental challenge into an economic opportunity.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Several factors contributed to the project's success.

- Collaboration with researchers in biological control was crucial.
- The involvement of the government in project design facilitated obtaining the necessary permits. On-site visits by government officials allowed them to witness the problem firsthand.
- Mass-rearing facilities were adapted to the local context using locally available materials.
- Careful control of water quality parameters in rearing tanks optimised weevil reproduction.
- Active involvement of local fishermen and community members in manual removal of *Salvinia* built ownership and trust.
- The recognition of local knowledge (e.g. fishermen's awareness of *Salvinia* impacts) enhanced the credibility and cultural relevance of the project.
- Securing additional funding also played a significant role in achieving the project's goals.

Photo credit: © African Marine Mammal Conservation Organization

LESSONS LEARNED FROM CONSERVATION ACTIONS IN CAMEROON

The conservation initiatives undertaken in Cameroon have provided valuable insights into the best practices and challenges associated with species protection.

Photo credit: © BZS

4.1 The importance of adaptive management

One of the most significant lessons learned is the importance of adaptive management in conservation. The use of data-driven tools, such as SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) technology in Bénoué National Park, has proven highly effective in optimising patrol strategies and resource allocation. By integrating real-time data collection and analysis, conservation teams have been able to respond more swiftly to illegal activities, resulting in a 50% reduction in poaching and other unlawful activities in the park. Achile Mengamenya, a Park Conservator in Bénoué National Park, noted, *"The implementation of this project has enabled us to provide a positive response to the problems undermining Bénoué National Park. The results are palpable and visible."* This success underscores the need for flexibility in conservation planning, allowing for adjustments based on field realities.

4.2 The fundamental role of community engagement

Community engagement plays a fundamental role in conservation sustainability. Projects that actively included local communities, such as employing local labour for infrastructure development in Bénoué or organising community sensitisation programmes in Tchabal Mbabo, yielded better long-term outcomes. When local populations are directly involved in conservation activities, they develop a sense of ownership and responsibility and increasing compliance with conservation regulations. This approach was particularly critical in areas where local livelihoods depend on natural resources, making it essential to offer alternative economic opportunities, as seen in the Lake Ossa *Salvinia* eradication project, where communities were trained in alternative livelihoods such as ecological charcoal production and sustainable fishing.

"Projects that actively included local communities yielded better long-term outcomes."

4.3 Improved monitoring efficiency through modern technology

The integration of modern technology has significantly improved conservation efficiency across Cameroon's protected areas. The use of SMART tools in Bénoué National Park enabled better coordination of eco-guard patrols, while camera trapping and remote sensing in Tchabal Mbabo provided crucial data on leopard presence and broader biodiversity in the region. These technologies have enabled conservation teams to operate more effectively, gathering concrete evidence of species distribution and poaching hotspots, leading to better-informed decision-making. In contrast, traditional monitoring methods, which relied heavily on direct observations and manual reporting, were often prone to inefficiencies and data gaps.

4.4 Importance of collaborating with governmental agencies

Collaboration with governmental agencies has also proven to be a key success factor in ensuring long-term conservation impact. The recognition of conservation achievements by the Cameroonian government, such as its acknowledgement of the Bénoué National Park project, has helped secure ongoing support for conservation measures.

In the case of Tchabal Mbabo, the project's success in documenting biodiversity and community interest led to renewed government discussions about gazetting the area as a national park. A conservation stakeholder working in Tchabal Mbabo remarked, *"The project reignited interest from the government on the gazettement of Tchabal Mbabo as a national park."* This demonstrated the influence that well-documented conservation efforts can have on policy decisions, ensuring stronger legal protections for biodiversity-rich areas.

> The project reignited interest from the government on the gazettement of Tchabal Mbabo as a national park.

4.5 Impact of holistic species approaches

The need for a holistic approach to conservation has been emphasised across multiple projects. Effective species conservation requires not only direct interventions such as anti-poaching patrols and habitat restoration but also community education, law enforcement strengthening, and alternative livelihood development. The combination of these strategies has been particularly evident in the lion conservation project in Mpem-Djim National Park, where efforts to mitigate human-lion conflict through boma construction (livestock enclosures) resulted in an 80-90% reduction in livestock attacks, improving both local attitudes toward lions and their chances of survival in the region. A conservation partner involved in the Mpem-Djim lion conservation project highlighted the importance of conflict mitigation strategies, stating, *"By reducing the conflict between livestock and lions…we have increased the acceptability level of the local communities towards the presence of lions in their vicinity, thereby increasing the possibility of future co-existence."*

This underscores how education and practical solutions, such as livestock enclosures, can transform local attitudes toward predators, reducing retaliatory killings and improving long-term species survival. These lessons highlight the necessity of integrating multiple conservation tools and approaches to address complex challenges in species protection.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE SPECIES CONSERVATION EFFORTS

- Building on the successes and lessons learned, future conservation efforts in Cameroon should prioritise **the expansion of SMART technology training** across multiple protected areas. Training more conservation teams in using this tool can standardise and enhance monitoring efforts nationwide. This will be particularly useful in other vulnerable areas where illegal activities remain a significant threat to threatened species.
- Additionally, there is a pressing need to **strengthen law enforcement and anti-poaching measures**. While current efforts have yielded positive results, continued investment in eco-guard training, equipment, and logistical support will be essential in further reducing threats such as poaching, illegal logging, and habitat encroachment. Complementing law enforcement with increased funding for **infrastructure development**, including road rehabilitation and surveillance systems, will enhance the ability of park authorities to reach and protect remote wildlife habitats more effectively.
- **Deepening community involvement** should remain a priority in future conservation projects. Educational programmes that promote biodiversity conservation alongside livelihood diversification opportunities can further promote species conservation and encourage greater participation in conservation initiatives. In certain areas, additional funding should be directed toward alternative income-generating activities, such as eco-tourism and sustainable farming, to alleviate local economic pressures that drive unsustainable hunting and land use practices.
- **Securing sustainable financing mechanisms** for conservation projects will be critical. Exploring public-private partnerships (PPPs), carbon market initiatives, and international funding sources can ensure that conservation interventions do not suffer from funding shortfalls. SOS AWI projects demonstrated how additional financial backing from international foundations can significantly enhance conservation outcomes, making it imperative for future projects to diversify funding sources.

> Future conservation efforts in Cameroon should prioritise the expansion of SMART technology training across multiple protected areas, strengthen law enforcement, deepen community involvement, and secure sustainable financing to enhance long-term conservation outcomes.

- **long-term ecological monitoring** must be integrated into conservation strategies. Regular biodiversity assessments, genetic analysis of key species, and habitat quality evaluations will provide essential data to measure conservation impact and guide future actions. The success of projects, which documented species presence through camera traps and interviews, highlights the importance of continuous monitoring to assess population trends and habitat conditions over time.

Photo credit: © African Marine Mammal Conservation Organization

CONCLUSION

Thanks to the support provided through the IUCN SOS African Wildlife Initiative, the reduction of illegal activities in Bénoué National Park, the progress toward securing protected status for Tchabal Mbabo, the eradication of invasive species in Lake Ossa, and the success of human-wildlife conflict mitigation efforts in Mpem-Djim all serve as strong examples of conservation in action. These projects have demonstrated that species conservation cannot be achieved through enforcement alone; it requires integrated approaches that are a combination of habitat restoration, community engagement, technological innovation, and government collaboration.

Looking ahead, sustaining and scaling up these initiatives will require investment, policy support, adaptive management, and partnerships to address current and emerging challenges. By building on past successes and incorporating lessons learned, conservation stakeholders can ensure the long-term protection of Cameroon's rich biodiversity, securing a future for species with strategic planning and continued collaboration, Cameroon has the potential to serve as a model for integrated and sustainable conservation efforts across Africa.

\\ By building on past successes and incorporating lessons learned, conservation stakeholders can ensure the long-term protection of Cameroon's rich biodiversity.//

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