

One of the main areas of success has been regional collaboration to effectively manage an ecosystem that straddles international borders. Given that the three countries sharing the ecosystem have had strained diplomatic relations with each other during this period of conflict, the focus of the regional collaboration has been at the technical, field level. The park staff from the three countries (four parks) have developed a strategy for working together, sharing information, communicating regularly and implementing joint activities, to ensure the effective management of the transboundary forests.

With peace returning to the region, it will become possible to formalize this collaboration and involve the governments at the highest level. The park authorities, however, have formally agreed to work together to ensure the threatened forests will be managed collaboratively. In January 2004, the representatives of Uganda, Rwanda and the DRC signed a Memorandum of Understanding committing them to a strategy of regional collaboration for conservation. This is an important landmark contributing both to conservation and the building of peace in this region.

Annette Lanjouw
International Gorilla Conservation
Programme
P.O.Box 48177
Nairobi
Kenya

E-mail: alanjouw@awfke.org and
igcp@awfke.org
Website: www.mountaingorillas.org

The International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) is a coalition of African

Wildlife Foundation, Fauna and Flora International, WWF.

FORESTRY AND CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES IN HOSTING REFUGEE AREAS (KENYA – UGANDA)

By Luc Cambrézy

Places and territories are perceived differently at times of peace or during conflict and extreme violence. When security becomes a major issue it is evident that some places are more exposed to risk than others. For everyone involved -protagonists or civilians, oppressors or victims- places like mountains or forests can become refuge areas in times of war. They are especially sought after for protection. This article examines the place and the ambiguous role of forest areas in two distinct refugee hosting situations, in Kenya and Uganda.

1 The example of Kenya

Somalian refugees have been gathering in Dadaab in eastern Kenya since 1991 and 1992. Extensive camps have been set up in this semi-arid region of quite dense bush and bushy savannah. For several years, the refugees were left to their own devices for their supply of wood, fuel, and construction (poles, herbs, etc.). It should be pointed out that this practice -akin to gathering- has had little overall effect on the maintenance of plant cover as long as stocks of dead wood were plentiful. Unfortunately, the proximity of this bush, so vital for the refugees, creates problems. These tracts of vegetation also serve as *refuges* for armed groups, more

or less a product of the Somalian civil war, who gravitate around these camps. These gangs, attracted by the diverse opportunities for thieving and pillaging, are responsible for the proliferation of attacks and frequent rape of women from the camps. The ever-greater distances these women have to go to collect wood have made bush areas increasingly dangerous and inaccessible for them.

The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), seeking to remedy this situation and fulfil its duty to protect refugees, set up a wood collection and distribution programme in 1998. The objective is to minimise the time women and girls have to spend in the bush around their camp. The programme funds local traders and transporters for regular delivery of fuelwood at the refugee camps. This is laudable from a humanitarian point of view. Yet it is highly precarious, both in financial (funding is at risk of suspension at any moment) and environmental terms. In this region, with its pastoral economy, there is a dual risk. On the one hand it is to be feared that insidious privatisation of wood resources will lead to ever increasing prices making the wood too expensive for the poorest and more vulnerable. On the other hand -and this has already been observed- the simple gathering of dead wood is hardly compatible with traders' and transporters' quest for ever higher and more immediate profit. In fact, it is more profitable to clearcut a small patch of living forest than to collect dead wood over an extended area.

This situation prompts fears over the wood distribution programme; however justified it may be in terms of refugee protection. The programme proves to be dangerous in terms of plant cover protection and renewal.

In this region of extensive livestock rearing, the vegetation is the sole important resource. Together with the necessary freedom of access to water points, it is essential that this plant cover remains a protected and shared resource.

2 The example of Uganda

In the North-West of Uganda, refugees from neighbouring Sudan are gathered in the districts of Arua, Moyo and Adjumani, an area of woody savannah and open forest. Unlike in Kenya, they are hosted in rural settlements rather than in camps. The refugees are given land use rights, which encourage them to cultivate the terrain. This policy aims to reduce dependence on food distribution and, to that end, to reduce dependency on the World Food Programme.

These sites are usually located in the periphery of local populations, where clearing of woodlots is considered as an essential first step towards cultivation. Here, deforestation occurs as a consequence of a political and economic decision. Humanitarian aid is used as a driving force for local development. Opening up forest sites for refugees and development of basic infrastructure (roads, schools, clinics, wells) are effectively instruments of agricultural colonisation.

In this example, the forest is perceived primarily as a space to be conquered not so much for timber resources as for the potential expansion of agriculture it represents. The importance of this objective to conquer, develop and control a territory is augmented by the fact that the forests are invariably used as the base for murderous attacks that are launched by the Lord Revolutionary Army guerrilla forces. Mountainous areas are always difficult to

deal with. But a forest judged to be a threat to security is relatively easy to destroy. This is why, from the point of view of the authorities in the region, pushing back the forest represents –at least temporarily– progress towards peace and development.

Conclusion

In times of conflict, forest areas have the particular characteristic of representing a space whose measured value depends on at least two different perceptions: 1) the forest as a place that produces a prized resource, wood; 2) the forest as a particular space whose structure and organisation (mainly tree density) provides better cover than others for hiding places. However, a forest which provides a good hiding place for some represents a threat to others.

In the two examples given above, the insecurity of the wooded areas does not lead to the same effects. In the Kenyan case, insecurity of the bush hinders access to wood resources or makes it problematic. In the Ugandan example, the danger of the forest encourages its programmed destruction. Herein lies the lesson to remember: insecurity does not provide protection against forest destruction, it can accelerate or postpone forest destruction in specific ways.

Luc Cambrézy
Geographer , Director of Research
Institut de Recherche pour le
Développement (IRD)
32 Avenue Henri Varagnat
93143 Bondy CEDEX
France

E-mail: Luc.Cambrezy@bondy.ird.fr

NIGERIA: ARMED CONFLICT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE NIGER DELTA

By Samuel A. Igbatayo

The Niger Delta is one of the world's largest wetlands, covering an area of 20,000km² in Southern Nigeria with an annual rainfall in the range 3,000mm to 4,500mm. The Niger Delta lies at the heart of the tropical rain forest, with enormous biological diversity, featuring unique plants and animals. Ecologically, the Niger Delta comprises four zones: coastal barrier islands, mangroves, fresh water swamp forests, and lowland rain forests. (Darah, 2001).

Political Economy

The Niger Delta, in recent times, has become a strategic region in Nigeria's social, political and economic framework. Due to the region's huge endowment in hydrocarbons, the Niger Delta now commands a dominant position in Nigeria's political economy, raising the stakes for the region's indigenous peoples, as well as Governments at the Local, State and Federal levels. The Niger Delta has contributed the bulk of revenue that accrues to the Federal Government over the past three decades, through the huge reserves of crude oil and gas discovered in the region. (Van Buren, 2001).

However, the development profile of the Niger Delta presents a paradox: despite the abundant natural resources prevalent in the region, the area is undermined by endemic poverty and its people are ranked among the poorest in the world. The emergence of poverty in the midst of plenty in the Niger