



The development of pro-biodiversity value chains: a complementary and beneficial approach to the conservation strategy of Protected Areas in West and Central Africa

Background

The erosion of biodiversity is accelerating in Africa. Anthropogenic pressures are endangering species and their habitats. Climate change is accelerating this loss and reinforcing the loss of ecosystem functionality.

Millions of people¹ depend on the products and services that Nature provides, especially the poorest populations (hunting, wood, food, health). In Africa, 50% of the rural poor (<1.25USD/day) live in or around forests. They are seriously affected by the decrease in accessible resources.

Furthermore, conflicts of interest prevail at all levels:

- ✓ **Local communities** have no alternative but to exploit nearby natural resources in order to survive. They develop a feeling of abandonment and see Protected Areas (PAs) as obstacles to the extension of their agricultural systems and traditional resource harvesting. They also have little say in decisions about PA management, and have few means to oppose forest operators. On the other hand, **PA managers** are alarmed by over-exploitation of resources and intensive poaching practices by communities. This situation reveals two visions for a unique forest: conservation organizations concerned about the preservation of species, and local communities whose lifestyles are inseparable from the forest.
- ✓ **Administrations** and control services in the field are inefficient because they are without means, and sometimes corrupt.
- ✓ **Economic actors** have no interest in creating value chains in the isolated and insecure areas where PAs are located and where they are subject to undue levies. This further restricts the implementation of economic development programs.
- ✓ Moreover, **Civil Society Organisations**, actors committed to biodiversity protection and economic and social development, do not have sufficient means and are constrained by short-term funding.
- ✓ As stakeholders do not work in synergy, development aid is not very effective. **Donors** do not see a return on investment.

¹ IFAD, World Rural Development Report (2016)



Solutions

The vision of the Noé's programme

Faced with this alarming observation, Noé's programme proposes to link **biodiversity conservation and the economic development of local populations**, by mobilising all stakeholders at the level of PA territories. The approach consists in implementing actions that offer local communities a virtuous economic and social model, while contributing to biodiversity conservation, thus creating a consensus among all stakeholders. Noé is thus developing **pro-biodiversity value chains**, contributing positively to the protection of ecosystems through the valorisation of non-timber forest products (moabi butter, wild mango butter), cash crops (coffee and cocoa under shade, certified organic coconut and cashew nut, etc.) and food crops (agroecology and agroforestry).

These pro-biodiversity value chains aim to synergise the economy and biodiversity in the following way:

- i. **By supporting the populations living around PAs to market products from nature.** PAs and their peripheries become a sustainable source of income for communities, contributing to the acceptance of PAs and the proactive involvement of communities in the conservation and good management of natural resources.
- ii. **By creating synergies between economic actors and PA managers**, i.e. by associating the development of value chains with conservation activities that have a measurable positive impact on biodiversity. Depending on the case, these activities can take various forms: development of management plans for the sustainable use of natural resources, participation of populations in the fight against poaching and the protection of emblematic habitats, reforestation of degraded areas (protected areas, buffers, corridors), organic or zero-deforestation certification of products justifying an increase in value on selling prices, training of producers in sustainable agricultural practices, or contribution of the commodity chains to a Conservation Fund.

Operational methodology

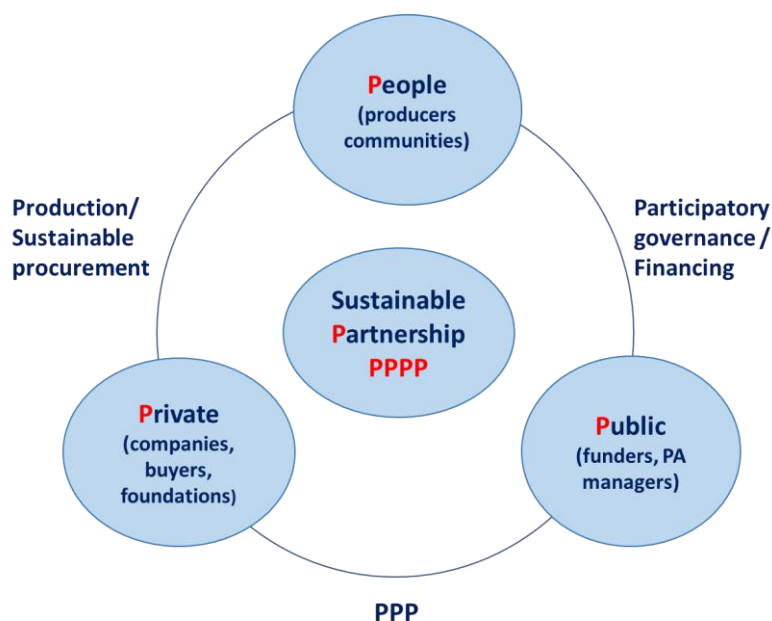
Noé's action focuses on structuring sustainable natural ingredient chains, within and on the periphery of protected areas, and on identifying economic players (traders, exporters, traders, food and cosmetics companies...) to develop the supply chain and ensure market opportunities. For the implementation of the actions, Noé provides technical and financial support to civil society actors engaged with local communities.

As the dimensioning of biodiversity protection projects is generally too small in relation to the problems to be solved, the **project must be anchored at the territorial level**, so that it is placed in a broader framework than the PA. This approach makes it possible to include the most relevant public, private and community actors. **An appropriate jurisdictional level** allows local communities to be involved and to respond to issues that go beyond the farm or village level, such as deforestation and environmental degradation. The choice of the appropriate territorial level is made on the basis of a **territorial diagnosis**.

This diagnosis consists of identifying and analysing:

- 1) Social, economic and environmental **issues**;
- 2) **Stakeholders**:
 - Local CSOs in a position to implement activities;
 - Producers and their Community organisations;
 - Managers of protected areas, including community conservation areas;
 - Existing or interested local, national and international private economic actors;
 - Local and national political authorities concerned with conservation and development;
 - Interested Donors;
- 3) **The promising pro-biodiversity value chains**. Depending on the opportunities, the targeted markets are local (food crops), national (food and cosmetics), regional (for the Nigerian market for example) and international (certified organic and fair-trade products for the niche cosmetics market for example³). Noé has developed a methodology for identifying the commodity chains to be developed covering economic, environmental, social and institutional components.

If the territorial diagnosis makes it possible to identify opportunities for action combining economic and social development and biodiversity conservation, Noé works with stakeholders to establish a logical framework for the implementation of **Public Private People Partnerships (PPPP)** ⁴.



³ Noé has advised the Natural Resources Stewardship Circle (NRSC), a trade association of some 20 international cosmetics and fragrance companies, on improving the environmental, economic and social sustainability of their supply chains. Noé has also developed expertise in innovative Non-Timber Forest Products (e.g. [mbalaka oil](#)).

⁴ <https://www.uneceppp-icoe.org/people-first-ppps/what-are-people-first-ppps/>



The results

Noé's results have been obtained on 44 projects in 24 tropical countries over the last 10 years. On average, 500k € per year are reserved for field activities allowing to generate positive impacts for the three main targets of the model: local populations, private sector, PA managers. These results are presented below and illustrated by a project implemented in Ghana with the local CSO WAPCA (West African Primate Conservation Action). This project started in July 2017 and aims to produce organic & fair-trade coconut oil to empower women and protect the exceptional biodiversity of the Kwabré - Tanoé trans-boundary forest (south-west Ghana, south-east Côte d'Ivoire).

By implementing this model, the primary beneficiaries are directly impacted:

As people see improved incomes associated with the presence of PA and with commercialization support programs, they produce sustainable products to replace those less favorable to biodiversity, reduce their pressure on natural resources and engage in biodiversity protection from outside operators.

The Kwabré - Tanoé Forest provides many ecosystem services to local communities that depend on nature for their livelihoods. Lacking alternative income-generating activities, local communities are finding it difficult to sustainably manage their own natural resources, making them increasingly vulnerable. Following the call from local communities for support in the preservation of the Kwabré Forest, WAPCA was instrumental in the creation of the CREMA Ankasa-Tano (Community Resource Management Area). **The local population is now in charge of natural resource management in and around the forest.** The value chain is structured in an equitable and inclusive manner, allowing income maximization for the most vulnerable populations. After 3 years, **200 farmers and 45 processors have** been trained in organic and fair-trade practices, and **\$96,000 in revenues have been generated in 2019** by the producers. It is estimated that from 2021 onwards, **\$345,000 will be generated per year** for 500 farmers and 150 processors. The **women who are the main actors** in the value chain are acquiring legitimacy within the community. The increase in their income gives them the opportunity to lift out of poverty – and their families and communities along with them.

The economic actors, traders and processors, can develop profitable value chains. Resources are managed sustainably, ensuring long-term supply to the value chains. International buyers, anxious to rely on the sustainable origin of their purchases, make a financial commitment to support this approach in the long term.

The Ghanaian Savannah Fruits Company (SFC), present in the territory and engaged in the production and sale of organic and fair-trade cosmetic products, was contacted by Noé to provide technical support for the construction of a coconut oil processing centre. In 2019, 2 production centres were set up. Following the first results, Sofi Tucker, the foundation of Sundial, a buyer of coconut oil in the United States, decided to invest (\$257k) to build an additional processing centre. Sundial⁵ will ensure the sale of certified products. These **3 centres will produce more than 180MT** of oil per year.

⁵ Sundial Brands is a leading hair and skin care company in the United States, known for its innovative use of high quality natural ingredients. Sales 2018: \$240 million.

PA managers then benefit from community support. Part of the profits generated by producers and/or private partners contribute to the Conservation Fund, which finances biodiversity conservation actions.

This swamp forest (13500 ha) shelters an exceptional biodiversity with 1800 species of endemic plants, 31 birds, 35 mammals and 49 amphibians. It is also the last habitat of the Roloway's *Cercopithecus roloway* (*Cercopithecus roloway*), one of the 25 most endangered primates in the world, as well as the crowned Mangabey (*Cercocebus lunulatus*). In order to protect this habitat threatened by deforestation and poaching, a conservation agreement between the community organization (CREMA Ankasa-Tano) and the Savannah Fruits Company was signed and defined:

- **CREMA's commitment** to preserve the forest through conservation actions such as ecological monitoring, reforestation, and compliance with organic certification standards; **1000 community patrols** are carried out in the forest per year to reduce illegal activities.
- **Savannah Fruits Company's commitment** to provide technical support and to buy coconuts from farmers at a fair price with a premium, and to contribute to the CREMA Conservation Fund with 1 pesewa per coconut purchased. **\$5,500 of conservation premium are generated per year** for the benefit of CREMA, which will allow them to become financially self-sufficient beyond the project. **1 fair trade fund** has also been set up to strengthen the health and education structures in CREMA.

Partners also benefit from the program:

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) see their capacities strengthened, they become active in public advocacy for the improvement of policies and regulatory frameworks related to biodiversity conservation, the valorization and equitable sharing of natural resources and the fight against climate change.

At the start of the project, the CSO WAPCA had a long experience in biodiversity protection, but their skills in developing economic value chains were limited. Noé strengthened the CSO in this area to provide on-the-ground support to producer groups. The CSO will replicate this approach in other sites in Ghana where they are involved (Ankasa NP, Cape Three Points). In addition, WAPCA in collaboration with the Ivorian CSO CSRS, is working to strengthen biodiversity conservation by initiating the **creation of a transboundary community reserve**, the first in West Africa, with the Ghanaian and Ivorian authorities.

Donors, satisfied with the results achieved, are continuing their financial support, advocating for the strengthening of national legislation, encouraging private investment at all stages of the supply chain, and promoting the development of green capitalism.

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) has provided funding for capacity building of local partners (CREMA, WAPCA) and support for the protection of transboundary forest. Funding from the French Development Agency (100K€), supported more specifically the construction of a processing centre. Following the results, CEPF renewed its support twice (overall CEPF funding: 400K€). AFD's phase 2 is currently being written.

The model

