

Cross River Environmental (CRE) Coalition

Accomplishments & Skills

Under the 'Cross River Environmental Capacity Building Project' supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), 2003-2006, through One Sky, a Canadian NGO, the Nigerian project implementation partners became known as the Cross River Environmental (CRE) Coalition. These groups included Development in Nigeria (DIN), CERCOPAN, Nigeria Conservation Foundation's S-W Regional Office, Living Earth (Nigeria) Foundation's Calabar office and the NGO Coalition for Environment (NGOCE), which itself is made up of 41 NGOs and CBOs from forest communities in Cross River State. One Sky remains part of the Coalition and plays a coordinating role.

The CRE Coalition involves like-minded organizations that are operating in CRS – with a common vision: to protect the biome of the state. The coalition members have a pro-poor and pro-community approach and all members focus in an integrated way on sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity conservation/forest management. Coalition members have adopted a joint identity to realize interests held in common.

CRE Coalition's overall accomplishments and achievements:

- The Cross River Environment (CRE) Coalition members have been able to bridge the gap between the realities of the communities they work in and government policies and policy makers at high-levels in Cross River State government urging that communities be more involved in policy development and policy implementation. The Coalition's advocacy work on forest management and biodiversity is based on its members' practical community activities, and builds on their credibility with these communities. Coalition members have thus gained a voice, and have used it to be vocal on policy matters to reflect the concerns of the communities with which they work.
- The CRE Coalition members have been working together to review policies in Cross River State, in areas that concern them, namely forest law and policy, wildlife law and ecotourism.
- Regarding the forestry law review in particular, the CRE Coalition maintains the view that communities must be involved in forest management on an ongoing basis as part of the governance system of Cross River State forests. The communities have been very willing to make a collective contribution to this review. The CRE Coalition members and the communities with which they work believe this community involvement must be incorporated into the new forest law for the State. The CRE Coalition continues to advocate on this matter.
- The CRE Coalition members have had a voice with government institutions on environmental issues critical to Cross River State – namely, with Cross River National Park, the Cross River State Forestry Commission and the Cross River State Tourism Bureau. Together, the CRE Coalition members and these agencies met with donors in May 2006 to explore funding opportunities. This exercise lent credibility to and endorsement of the CRE Coalition and its work. CRE Coalition members feel they can partner or collaborate with these institutions on further activities where efforts are complementary and in pursuit of agreed common objectives; for example, in pursuit of Global Environment Fund (GEF) grants.
- The Cross River State government is now inviting the CRE Coalition to participate in planning exercises. The State's Planning and Forest Commissions acknowledge the importance of working with NGOs to develop good programs and to include the voices of the rural communities which rely directly on renewable natural resources and the forest for their livelihoods. CRE Coalition members are implementing a

United National Development Program (UNDP)-funded project, together with government. CRE Coalition members are working with the State government on wetlands research. The Cross River State Tourism Bureau has invited the CRE Coalition into planning activities related to ecotourism. The CRE Coalition has already had input into the drafting of the Cross River State's Empowerment and Economic Development Statement (SEEDS). These strategic collaborations with government provide specific input based on community consultations, and attempt to keep open the doors of communication within the political arena. As some of these links have depended on open-minded government officials, the CRE Coalition continues working towards institutionalizing its participation in important processes while ensuring this networking is at the highest possible level of influence

- On related matters, CRE Coalition members have had a significant role in ending illegal logging conducted by WEMCO, a foreign company from China, resulting in the departure of the company from Cross River State.
- CRE Coalition members had a direct role in the formation of the Cross River Forestry Commission as far back as 1999. The Commission now includes seats for private sector and civil society representatives as a result of input that was made at that time.
- CRE Coalition members have seen their activity result in the establishment of a gender desk officer in the Cross River State Ministry of Women's Affairs. The CRE Coalition's Gender and HIV/AIDS team have been integrated into government processes and projects, and this will continue. The Cross River National Park sought and received HIV/AIDS training from the CRE Coalition.
- There is a growing list of Local Government Areas (LGAs) where CRE Coalition members are active. The CRE Coalition is working in 14 of the 18 LGAs in Cross River State; a tabulated list of the projects and the communities where CRE Coalition members are involved is available. These communities are making ever-growing demands related

to their land rights, and concerning land-use planning. The communities express confidence in the CRE Coalition members and their expectations are rising as they see the effectiveness of their work together. The communities are increasingly demanding to be involved in activities pertaining to their livelihoods and their land.

- Government officials in Cross River State have acknowledged the past error of not including communities in their planning activities, and not working together with NGOs. Their fear of this collaboration has lessened over the years. In turn, the NGOs can be seen as lending credibility to government processes. The CRE Coalition has been able to link to government officials at many levels, and there is now a solid networking web of links. It is felt that these links will survive any change in government that may occur as a result of elections. However, the CRE Coalition members firmly believe that it is best if NGO input to implementation of legislation – to policies and programs – is institutionalized and not discretionary. Further, the CRE Coalition believes that the communities' roles in decision-making should also be institutionalized, and in cases where laws are being implemented, that implementation should be monitored to ensure the best outcomes.

CRE's accomplishments in 'sustainable livelihoods':

- Coalition members have been engaged in land-use mapping and planning, in rezoning land to protect forests and biodiversity and to restrict the impact of farming on forests. The goal of these activities has been to gain the best sustainable uses of renewable natural resources. Agreements around new land use have been the norm, and conflicts have been reduced as a result. While enforcement has not been consistent, communities are taking on more of a role in it.
- Rural livelihoods have been supported and their profile raised through activity aimed at this kind of improvement. Incomes have increased by new

methods of garri processing, for example. In one case, this has led to resources being applied to improving rural access roads into villages.

- Micro-credit schemes and micro-enterprises have assisted communities, and together with adult literacy, the gains have been cemented. Group formation and cooperative arrangements have strengthened project management at the community level. Gender training has markedly improved the participation of women in livelihood activities.
- The sale of non-timber forest products, including bush mango, has been encouraged as a source of income; grafting has helped to accelerate the production of bush mango, which, in turn, has led to better incomes. Afang production has improved rural nutrition. Bee-keeping, mushroom growing, and the raising of snails and grass-cutters for protein have also been undertaken in several communities with the dual impact of: i) improved nutrition, and ii) allowing forest animals a greater chance of survival as they are now hunted less.
- Community sawmills have been introduced where sustainable logging practices are being used.
- Reduction in material inputs for cocoa farming has increased profits from cocoa farming, though there are still gains to be made to get better prices overall, due to the stranglehold that marketers have on the overall cocoa economy.
- Marketing improvements have helped gain better prices for garri and bush mangos.
- Jobs have become available for rural people, including jobs as guards for protected areas, project managers and assistants, facilitators and tour guides, among others.
- Villages are also getting royalties from eco-tourism in some places.

Local Government Areas where CRE member's work in Cross River State:

CRE Coalition members work in 14 of the total of 18 Local Government Areas in Cross River State. These LGAs cover all of the protected forest areas and forest buffer zones in Cross River State:

- Akamkpa
- Akpabuyo
- Biase
- Boki
- Calabar Municipality
- Calabar South
- Etung
- Ikom
- Obanliku
- Obubra
- Obudu
- Odukpani
- Yakurr
- Yala

CRE Coalition members have available a list of all programs and projects under their direction, as well as the names of all the communities where these initiatives are being implemented. Also, each CRE Coalition member has available a statement of his or her individual accomplishments, plus his or her own list of donors. Full documentation is available.

CRE Coalition perspective on training and a community-based approach:

The CRE Coalition members understand that training is a part of long-term capacity building. They are firmly committed to the process that requires multiple skills upgrading and even the acquisition of new skills, resource infusion and working with communities on institutional strengthening and organizational development.

The CRE Coalition members have developed, and can implement, training packages in conjunction with well-planned support to communities. Such training works best when situated within programs tailored to individual community situations. This includes assessing needs and opportunities, assessing vulnerabilities and risks and preparing the content, designing the

programs specifically to each community context.

This approach is based on CRE Coalition members being active at the community level. It is primarily and fundamentally an environmental approach to natural resource management. The CRE Coalition experience links sustainable livelihoods and governance to natural resource management and forest conservation, it is 'pro-poor', and seeks improved environmental management and land husbandry. The CRE Coalition approach is also gender-sensitive and HIV/AIDS-aware for inclusive results.

The CRE Coalition strives to assist communities in extending the work they are doing in a way that also ensures the approach is an effective one that will elicit results. From the CRE Coalition experience, members can advise others on how they can be effective in a long-term approach to improving livelihoods.

CRE Coalition members' skills

1. Organizational development skills

- Coalition building
- NGO management
- Work planning
- Computerization
- Internal reporting
- Staff training
- Human resource management

2. Enterprise skills

- Business management
- Community business planning
- Economic research; socio-economic research
- Design of income-generating projects
- Micro-enterprise development
- Micro-credit scheme management – small scale
- Livelihood training
- Specific technical skills in areas such as honey production and bee-keeping, mushroom farming, snail and grass cutter propagation, afang propagation, small-scale portable saw milling, other non-timber forest products, market gardening
- Product marketing

- Production efficiency improvements; e.g. in cocoa farming, garri processing and marketing improvement (e.g. bush mango)
- Literacy training

3. Renewable natural resources skills

- Ecosystem-based management
- Invasive plant control planning and implementation
- Watershed management – assessment, planning and implementation on a small scale
- Wildlife management
- Captive breeding and release of endangered species
- Protected area management – delineation, community participation, bylaw development, monitoring and reporting
- Biodiversity research
- Community-based land-use and resource-use planning
- Environmental education
- Sustainable forestry
- Sustainable agriculture
- Woodlot management
- Tree nursery establishment and management
- Community forest management
- Fire Tracing

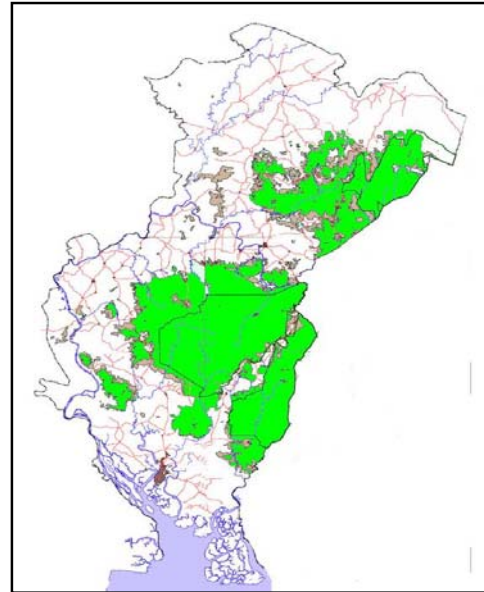
4. Community analysis and transformation

- Conflict mitigation, conflict intervention and conflict resolution through community approach
- Popular theatre and storytelling
- Community organizing, mobilization, sensitization, collective action planning and input
- Training of trainers
- Community education
- Integral leadership
- Adult literacy and numeracy training
- Community and interactive radio instruction
- Community resource centre establishment and management

5. Project and information management skills

- Financial management, including accounting and reporting
- Project monitoring and evaluation; performance monitoring

- Project planning and design and proposal preparation and reporting, including results-based approach
 - Information management
 - GIS/remote sensing and land-use/thematic mapping
- 6. Advocacy and educational skills**
- Evidence-based policy advocacy and documentation/reporting
 - Socio-economic research
 - Policy advocacy and policy dialogue
 - HIV/AIDS education, strategy planning for mainstreaming into programs
 - Gender awareness and mainstreaming
 - Donor relations management
 - Information, education and communications (IEC) materials production
- 7. Training of trainers** in many areas mentioned above.



Remaining Guinean Rain Forest in Cross River State
(adapted from McColluch 2006)

Over 90% of Nigeria's original forests are gone.

Cross River State contains **30% of Nigeria's remaining forests**, which represent a rare fragment of Lower Guinean Tropical Rain Forest – the largest remnant of its kind in West Africa. This rainforest is home to some of the **rarest** and most **endangered** life forms on our planet, including the **rainforest elephant**, **Sclater's Guenon Monkey**, and **Cross River Gorilla**. The Guinean Rain Forest has also been identified as a global **hotspot for biodiversity**, and is one of the highest international conservation priorities in the world.

This oasis is also home to a diverse and growing population of **people** who have inhabited this area for millennia. Speaking many languages and practicing many cultures, they have one thing in common – they all depend on a thriving forest environment for their **income, health and sustenance**. However, extreme poverty and population growth has increased pressures on remaining forest resources.

The **Cross River Environment Capacity Development (CRE)** Project is working to strengthen NGO capacity to affect gender-sensitive policy change and environmental improvement in Cross River State. This project is implemented through the **CRE Coalition**, which brings together five Nigerian Environmental NGOs, Development in Nigeria (DIN), Living Earth Nigeria Foundation (LENF), Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF), NGO Coalition for the Environment (NGOCE), Centre for Education, Research and Conservation of Primates and Nature (CERCOPAN), and a Canadian Executing Agency: **One Sky - Canadian Institute for Sustainable Living**. Funding for the project is supplied by the Canadian International Development Agency (**CIDA**).



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