

EUREP2 Monitoring Visit - 28th July 2008 - 8th Aug 2008

Sunday evening we discussed the proposed itinerary and made appropriate amendments given the problems of the wet season and the issues of transport and poor infrastructure in the field area.

Monday 28 July We were welcomed to SHUMAS and were formally introduced to the staff after an initial prayer for the success of our work. We met Roland who was the co-ordinator of the organic farming project, Beri, the project officer for environmental projects, Emanuel, the civil engineer and Bruno the field supervisor for EUREP2. Billian was also present as project co-ordinator with apologies received from the agronomist and Director of SHUMAS Stephen who was taken ill. A purposeful meeting ensued with polite greetings and recognition on our part of the marvellous and unselfish work which is being done for the disadvantaged in Cameroon. SHUMAS has extended its work beyond the NW province to include tree planting in the Extreme Northern region to combat desertification. In conclusion this initial meeting made very clear our common ethos and environmental and humanitarian concerns. We were warmly welcomed by the Provincial Delegate of Environmental and Nature Protection **Francis Wadt-Zela Fonye** who delighted in showing us around his growing nursery of saplings and happened to mention how grateful he was to SHUMAS for providing the plastic containers. After further questioning it became obvious that this was a supportive politician with similar aims to SHUMAS who was grateful for all their efforts and clearly used his experience and influence to ensure that he assisted in disputes.

Evening consisted of donating all we had brought to SHUMAS in terms of assistance for their work. We handed over documentation concerning organic farming, green manures, uses of the Neem tree, composting, weed control, termite control and nursery planting and stewardship. This was enhanced by some attractive posters on relevant issues of making compost, fuel efficient stoves, liquid manures, hygiene with latrines and natural pesticides. There were also several up to date First Aid books which could assist in their training of primary health care nurses from local communities. We also donated prizes for environmental competitions run in schools such as wind up torches and footballs.

There was also a plethora of patterns, ideas, tools and materials for FIOH womens' and disabled groups to use as SHUMAS deemed appropriate.

We had e-mail contact with M. Thomas concerning the elimination of Eucalyptus from his Australian sources. The internet sites were shared with SHUMAS but their needs to be a realisation of their limited and intermittent access to the web. Having scanned these sites they were more concerned with the elimination of stumps requiring expensive technical equipment way beyond the means and reach of this NGO. The issue as we understand it at the onset of this monitoring visit is of the secondary regeneration from the extensive lateral roots which requires a solution.

Tuesday 29th July saw our departure for Kumbo. A provincial town of 114,000 inhabitants at an altitude of 2000m. The initial visit to the mayor (**Njong Fonyuy Donatus**) proved very beneficial. An experienced local politician whose influence spreads far beyond this NW province. Another warm welcome and refreshment brought together an agreement in ethos. Clearly very supportive of SHUMAS and the EUREP project with good reason as the land surrounding the Mayoral offices had been the focus of EUREP1 and were now clearly benefiting local agriculture rather than depleting water tables. Perhaps this location would make the perfect demonstration pilot for crop rotation as the whole slope photographed seemed to now be devoted almost exclusively to maize with its consequent erosion potential. There was considerable agreement on climate change and the impact of more intense storms and a willingness for his deputy to join us in the field for two days next week. We concurred that the project had met with considerable success. Enough in places to warrant private landowners to undertake eucalyptus clearance without financial assistance from the project. We also were in agreement that the project would be best served by a longer timescale to get more people on side with the issue. He also made it quite clear that slow elimination was in their interests as eucalyptus has a substantial impact on the local economy with uses in housing infrastructure, electricity poles and fuel wood.

We proceeded on to several other local government departments of forestry, wildlife, nature conservation and water but were met with a closed door policy as it was obviously late in the afternoon at 2pm. A pity that having travelled extensively over poor infrastructure to arrive at Kumbo we were not able to discuss the project with a wider group of civil servants whose responsibility it is to engage in these matters.

Wednesday 30th July saw us journey about 90 minutes to Vekovi. The roads are only just passable in a 4x4 and only then if it does not rain anymore. So we had a thunderstorm whilst in the catchment. The photographic record clearly shows an improved environment in terms of agricultural potential. We were shown extensively around a couple of farms and witnessed eucalyptus replacement on many others. We are starting to discern between those that were a direct outcome of the project and those which have been copied privately because of the evidence of success of the project. Zones 1 and 4 were visited with zones 2 and 3 beyond our reach given the inclement weather. A comment was made by the chairman of the water committee that this was the first time he has personally met anyone following up the project since its inception. We spent an adequate amount of time interviewing and questioning a diversity of characters from the village, two small holder farmers, the nurse in charge of the health centre and the chairman of the water committee. We were made very welcome and invited into homes to conduct these surveys and even had the chief in attendance. These were the first surveys undertaken and were painstakingly completed with translators of pidgin English when necessary.

It is transparent from the answers given, that individuals we spoke to, had benefited greatly from the project as had their families and the whole community at large. There was much more land in production and much better nutritional availability and water availability. We were treated as royalty, accepted into their homes and given food as a gesture of gratitude. There are farmers here like Lazarus, who should be encouraged to disseminate his expertise across several villages as he now admits that they are lacking in enough labour to clear and maintain the whole area of clearance. He also understood the necessity for not using chemical fertilisers and pesticides in conjunction with water quality. Interesting to note, in this remote location that his felled eucalyptus still lies in a pile as he is so remote from profiting financially from the timber. He remarked that it occasionally gets "thiefed" in pidgin as the pile appears to be diminishing for local fuel wood. He also remarked that timber from the newly planted indigenous trees would be worth more financially than eucalyptus wood. The second farmer, a pregnant Hilda, walked several miles just to make sure that she was able to answer our questions. Her only concerns were about going beyond the project and negotiating privately with chainsaw operatives who had insisted on money up front for fuel and then not completed the work. Pleasing to see her initiative in extending the area felled but a threat to the scheme if this criminal malpractice were to become commonplace.

Dorothy, the head nurse at the village health centre, was very forthcoming in her answers to health related questions. Honestly admitting that child mortality is exceptionally rare and water-borne diseases eradicated. Her concerns centred around an apparent increase in Malaria. There are numerous interpretations here such as increased reporting of the illness all the way to warmer climates and mosquitoes accessing areas at altitude that were previously beyond their range. Other reasons could also be down to the fact that previous cases would not involve the Health Centre as poorer people would not have bothered to attend the clinic as they were afraid they could not afford treatment. She also highlighted when pressed that the prevalence rate for HIV was measurable as they do voluntary testing for those about to marry and compulsory testing for all pregnancies in order to offer anti-retrovirals. She was pleased to inform us of increased availability and affordability of condoms in the battle against ignorance and HIV. Results confirm 10% HIV positive which contradicts the national statistic of 5% and confirms the provincial statistic of 11% for the NW province. Elsewhere this statistical evidence was confirmed by another interviewee who was extremely open about dealing with her 18 year old step- daughter's diagnosed positive status.

Thursday 31st July

Proceeded to Melim catchment where we picked up Goram and attempted an easy track to begin with. The heavens opened again just as we were at the top of the catchment. This area had been the subject of EUREP2 but after discussing with the water management committee representative it was clear that they understood the important concept of protection of a substantial riparian buffer. We were shown several indigenous trees which were now flourishing and attempted to show the idea

of improving avian biodiversity. On the treacherous descent, we managed to photograph the issue of stump regeneration after only two years from the deep taproot. This problem was apparent all along the watershed and the issue appeared insurmountable given the persistence of this invasive species, I dropped in a few suggestions like tethering goats close to stumps and not allowing any other grazing. Cutting the stumps with vertical cuts and allowing the weather or termites to be introduced. The whole upper catchment needs serious additional treatment as this was like cutting off one head and seven grow in its place. It became clear from the questionnaire evidence that the locals recognized the problem but still lacked the means to deliver eradication of the persistent pest.

In the pm we made our way back to Kumbo and picked up a couple of water committee members from Romajai catchment which was the subject of EUREP1. We were trapped in the 4x4 sliding laterally towards a ditch we were unlikely to extricate ourselves from. With some local assistance and five or six pushing we finally got the vehicle to safety. Onward up the catchment on foot to see wells and water storage which was quite sophisticated but the water storage could be ameliorated with the idea of guttering which would have a multitude of benefits. Storing water nearer home, slowing erosion around the homestead, improving footpaths and even filling community wells. We were also told that the cleared land on the other side of the valley had made things much safer for women and children who had often been attacked and robbed whilst negotiating a passage through the dense eucalyptus forest.

Just as we were concluding our visit we stumbled across the headteacher of the Govt Romajai primary school of 268 primary school children. He had met with M. Thomas in EUREP1 and was delighted to show us his small nursery around the school environment. After formalities and washing we were invited back for some refreshment and a gathering where it was possible to complete some remaining questionnaires and exchange speeches on common areas of interest. We had an extensive brief including combating corruption. The issue reared its head here and I will brief our partners if required as this was peripheral to the project.

Friday 1st August

Late start as we waited for Billian she had made the effort of coming by service bus all the way from Bamenda. We did not have the company of the mayoral deputy as he had been called away to a meeting at the last minute. They did send two replacements from the council from their Rural development and Health and Social Committees. Off in smart Suzuki 4x4 which was necessary to access this area.

First call was the SHUMAS nursery in Kumbo where land had been donated by a benefactor for as long as they wanted. Shown around expertly by Edwin who had gained his nurseryman experience in EUREP1. Most impressive knowledge which needs to be passed onto others, this is happening as school groups regularly visit the site and take a full part in the weeding and transferring of saplings. In total now 35 species are being reared here from seeds gathered in the local forests and clearly

using organic methods to achieve their aims. The entrance sign claims 1.5 million saplings generated from this nursery alone but I was informed by separate sources that the number out planted exceeded 1.8 million to allow for those that did not take in their new locations. This enterprise dwarfed all other nurseries we had seen and was making a vital contribution to the project and employing disadvantaged children to gain credits for their school fees.

We then went to the council owned land of Tayav forest a site for EUREP1 and massively enlarged in EUREP2 as the photographs show. Interviews taken were exclusively female as they appeared to be the main beneficiaries of the project. Ladies joined us that had regularly been forced into the 15km walk to Nkuf in order to have access to farmland. Here about 1km from their homes was top quality land growing a staggering diversity of crops for their use. Each family had about 40mx20m plot which had been shared fairly and contracted so that they were required to do the onerous clearance of any secondary regeneration of eucalyptus. Women came streaming from every direction just to speak to us and they were clearly grateful for this opportunity to farm closer to home, clearly safer and better for women and their children. It was pleasing to note how many children both boys and girls were now working the land and carrying eucalyptus back home as fuel wood. We could have done all our questionnaires at this one location as dozens of families had their ability to take control of food production ameliorated by this project. The questionnaires confirm how appreciative these women are and the sight of young boys working the land is transforming attitudes to stereotypical gender divides. One respondent a nurse at Shisong hospital was able to maintain her plot on her day off as it was closer to home. This meant that she is able to feed her family and also generate further income to improve living standards.

On a final note I have to comment on the one chainsaw operative who was busily performing his work in the background. He was not wearing any personal protective equipment and clearly did not have any with him. He did admit that he had been issued and trained with the equipment but chose not to wear it because of the heat. He had a one hour journey to work on foot with a heavy chainsaw and therefore given the lack of health and safety requirements in areas like transport he chose not to wear the PPE. After I emphasised the need to protect himself, he agreed the need for this equipment but will I am sure continue his unsafe practices when not being observed. Most worrying was the lack of any safety headgear and no automatic cut off when the machine kicks back on the Stihl chainsaw.

Saturday 2nd August

Delayed start due to oil filter trouble with 4x4. Proceeded to RS Meluf where we were shown the contrast in the old school which had been donated and was clearly inappropriate for their needs. About fifty children in a tiny room with no ventilation nor light. Currently the whole school is being taught in a community hall with raffia matting separating the classrooms. This contrasted with the new school about to be opened on Sept 8th 2008. What a credit to M. Thomas, SHUMAS, AIDCAMPS and

SCHOOLS FOR AFRICA. The photos show what a fantastic difference will be made this academic year. We were shown around by the proud Headteacher and the chairman of the PTA who along with parents answered the questionnaire. As a statement of fact they were unable to have a summer break because of the dramatic increase in enrolments.

We progressed to the Catholic Primary further up hill which looked better than the old RS. Meluf, but decidedly inferior to the New RS Meluf, if you only judge a school on its infrastructure. I suspect in view of higher fees at the Catholic Primary they will lose children to the local government school as parents opt with their feet. The school farm looked in excellent condition as the photos support. There is an announcement in mass that the beans are ready this week and the children turn up in their holiday to harvest and prepare for sale which pays for a teacher.

We called in at a Private nursery in Meluf which had been developed as a result of EUREP1. The experienced nurseryman with 5 children was making a living harvesting seeds from within a few km of his home. He seemed to have a vast knowledge of the medicinal benefits of many plants and this experience should not be wasted.

In the afternoon we visited Kenneth a former employee of EUREP1 whose lifestyle now is a testimony to what a little education can do for his family. Kenneth greeted us warmly and offered refreshment of raffia wine. His well organised enterprise is growing *Jatropha* from seed which is encouraged by the local government as a bio fuel. He is totally organic with the pig providing the manure for the enterprise. He lives in a better than average house with substantial improvements having been recently made. On our arrival his sister had just received news of passing three A levels and other sisters are at secondary school completely funded by his nurseryman skills developed in EUREP1. As a final point of interest his arboreal skills have allowed him to graft apple trees from a neighbour. He now has six fruit bearing trees which make him 5000CFC per tree enough to send three children to school.

Sunday 3rd August

Day of rest began at 5.30am for 6.30 mass which lasted for two and a half hours including some wonderful singing and a long homily about Catholic schools. Visitor from Washington had publicised her work in countering child trafficking. Newsletter had an extensive piece on Catholic schools and their problems of funding and paying teachers salaries. This will only be exacerbated on the evidence we saw yesterday. New government legislation has brought in a minimum wage of 28,216 CFC I assume per month which means that as teachers were paid below minimum wage then a substantial increase is required. The newsletter explains this crisis in school funding and the realistically they can only afford to pay teachers salaries for 5 months out of the next 12. I wonder if the minimum wage initiative is a response to the strikes which devastated the economy earlier this year.

Journey to Oku was challenging for the 4x4 driver and passengers but we completed it in just under 2 hours. We had an evening meal followed by a meeting chaired and orchestrated by Mary Nkeng(The Godmother). She has established from small

beginnings a wonderful network of self help with 15 separate groups represented at the meeting. After formal introductions it was clear that a plethora of groups had spun off the main one involving diverse schemes from micro credit to fish farming. They agreed to answer the questionnaire as individuals with voting rights and the summary will reveal a great deal of thought and consideration went into the answers. It was a genuine pleasure to be involved in such a positive meeting of minds. It would appear that a major force for women's rights is emerging here which one hopes will be copied elsewhere. FIOH should be rather proud that the seed it sowed so long ago in Oku has germinated into a series of strong organisations with a marvellous matriarch at the helm. All this in view, on a sunny day, of a piece of unspoilt indigenous rainforest with road signs promoting eco- tourism. It is now clear where SHUMAS can access all the seeds it requires for the regeneration programme. We look forward tomorrow to the individual FIOH groups showing us their progress and ambitions for the future. After raising the issue of HIV it was apparent that here we had a grass roots organisation that was offering confidential advice and assistance to women and their families in the most tragic of circumstances.

Monday 4th August

Tremendous welcome and hospitality continue at Oku where Mary Nkeng organised a spectacular programme for us which included traditional dancing, Juju dancing (men), and various self written songs. After a marvellous speech from the President FIOH OKU, of which we have a transcript, she recounted all the achievements of the last 9 years and outlined their aspirations for the future. I reciprocated by restating what FIOH was all about and how impressed we were with their hospitality. We purchased from their shop without haggling and were presented with further personalised gifts on our departure. We left more than enough to cover any expenses they had incurred. The only negative on the visit were yet more chainsaw operators using exactly the same practices we had witnessed earlier in the week. No personal protective equipment whatsoever and worse still operating with children very close by. They acknowledged that they had training but saw themselves as too poor to bother with safety equipment.

HIV statistics are horrendous with Lui village reporting to me 35% adult prevalence rate from the testing of pregnant women.

We returned via a worsening route with about six extra passengers and two enormous bags of potatoes. In this wet season the issue is not growing them but transporting them for sale in Kumbo as no heavy trucks are permitted through the rain gate. Briefly met the deputy mayor again and he volunteered to answer my questions tomorrow.

Tues 5th August

I do get the feeling I am destined not to have a proper discussion with the deputy mayor. Frustrations at being kept waiting over two hours but we were in for a treat when we finally arrived at the SHUMAS Biofarm Organic farming project which has been planned since 2002. We felt very privileged to be shown around such a fantastic enterprise coming into fruition. Praise indeed to Manos Unidas from Madrid for

financing this wonderful project and working through SHUMAS. The site was architecturally designed with considerable effort into the planning of organic production. This will open as a training centre, charging minimal fees, for a nine month course in Organic Production. On site Dormitories, Refectory and Kitchen, Administration block and classrooms were supplemented by state of the art animal husbandry for goats, sheep, cane rats, rabbits, cattle, pigs, poultry and even a fish farm. All this in a wonderful setting with fantastic views and plentiful indigenous forest as well. The final feather in the cap comes in the form of renewable energy with five planned wind turbines and pride of place must go to the biogas digester which will power the whole show. Students will eat organic food in the refectory prepared not by using fuelwood but biogas instead. This is an amazing achievement and will make a remarkable contribution to rural development in NW Cameroon. It was an honour to sign the visitors book and pleasing to note that their inaugural visitor was Frances Fonye.

The afternoon brought us to Roh about 11km NE of Kumbo. This was the site of a women's co-operative set up under FIOH in 2001 by Mike Thomas whose name still appeared on the same page I signed in the visitors book. We were warmly welcomed by Angelina and her group who have achieved a great deal by working with SHUMAS in the areas of agriculture, water supply, education and health. We were greeted by their doctor who answered the questionnaire and then showed us around his clinic. We visited several patients and were then invited to eat in the meeting room. We gathered further statistics concerning child mortality but more specifically HIV. This remote corner is affected, but as yet it would appear not quite to the same degree that other communities have been. These were extremely generous people who were clearly deeply appreciative of the FIOH women's can do ethos supplemented by active assistance from SHUMAS. I have written testimony of thanks and appreciation to bring with me to both SHUMAS and Mike Thomas. The EUREP project has been an outstanding success in this location as witnessed by their answers to questions and their written testimonies.

Wed 6th August

Considerable surprise at a prompt 7.00am start. Off toward Ntumbaw. On leaving Kumbo the first few km. were populated with men and boys earning their living from eucalyptus fuelwood transporting it on little hand held carts into the nearby town. Shown the Shufai area of eucalyptus felling on the way into town, later to find it was owned by a local deputy Fon. We arrived in Ntumbaw picking up Pa OKK who runs a local NGO and SHUMAS appear to be working through him using his local knowledge contacts and dialect. We arrived at Nseh Makop to a wonderful welcome as we climbed up into their water catchment which was being assessed by Ernest a SHUMAS Graduate Water Engineer. Preliminaries done we were introduced to the Fon who wanted his picture taken. Speeches all around and it was clear that they were desperate for a clean and pure water supply to be piped into the village and

SHUMAS were responding to their application for assistance. We were again treated like royalty and truck became laden with gifts again including a live chicken.

Onto Ngulu, with a more formal ceremony in front of another Fon and the Cameroon flag. We were introduced formally to their various committees all interestingly male. Made much of the FIOH women's group and made clear that the involvement of women was paramount to successful development. Water catchment again assessed by Ernest while we conducted interview with the village headteacher. It was clear that these people were organising themselves into effective committees and pressing for improvements in their basic standard of living, Again we were inundated with gifts of appreciation for our involvement. We are definitely a novelty in this remote rural location. Too much planned in the same day and it was embarrassing that two women's groups had travelled considerable distances on foot just to be with us. One group from FIOH Baraki had come over rough terrain and gave us our third song and dance presentation followed by another FIOH group who entertained us with their song about the importance of adult literacy. Interview with local health care worker indicated that they thought that HIV was running at around 20% in testing on pregnant women.

Even then there was time to visit and trek a little to The OKK catchment and farm showing more felling of eucalyptus and planting of indigenous species. Finally, we trekked to a catchment where considerable planting and eradication of bracken had taken place to protect their water supply. Thorough day's work showing the initial impact of EUREP2 on the environment and lots of people keen to copy the project.

Although women are definitely gaining a voice in this society. There have been glimpses of the fact that there is still a considerable way to go before equality is achieved between the genders.

Thursday 7th August

Bright and early start and wonderful hospitality from Daniel (Pa OKK) and his family. Similarly the gentleman who had put us all up for the night decided over night not to charge because of the valuable work we were doing for the community. Off towards Ndu where everything went smoothly when we were met by another water catchment official who completed his questionnaire. Issues were raised about lack of co-operation between the two councils Ndu and Nkambe. We tried to arrange a meeting with the mayor of Ndu but he was already at a meeting in Bamenda. We progressed to Nkambe to be shown around their nursery which displayed some neglect and limited species variety. The nurseryman explained that he had some difficulties due to lack of resources. However fortunately the Mayor of Nkambe arrived and we were granted an interview. Most enlightening as this politician attempted to explain his procrastination by claiming not to have understood that an action plan was needed from his previous meeting with SHUMAS. Order restored we agreed that the example shown by Kumbo Council was a good model to follow and we showed him

photographs of good nursery practise and out planting. He agreed with the EUREP co-ordinator that he would now produce an action plan.

On leaving the office we had a fortuitous meeting with Marcel Nformi who runs his own organisation out of Ndu, Union Earth Cameroon with almost identical aims as he has been developing nurseries in fifteen villages around Ndu with a genuine bottom up approach to the issue and involving school children. He shared his recipe for stump killing as salt plus ashes from the fire plus used engine oil. I am not sure of the quantities involved but he insists that it works and as all three materials are available locally and are also cheap it has to be worth a try. I think we have met a person with a common cause, through a fortuitous link, who may well serve us well in the future. It must be recognised that these are remote outposts even for SHUMAS and its good offices. The situation in the Ndu/Nkambe area is totally different as you do not have such intensive use of the land. It is more akin to large scale cattle ranching and therefore the Mayor is only concerned with security of water catchments. Due to the different topography and the difficult political situation in this area, SHUMAS has had more difficulty in ensuring the sustainability aspect of the scheme in getting the councils to fully embrace the project as a necessity for their people.

This was confirmed in our final visit as we inspected a 2006 clearance and reforestation scheme. The regeneration was horrendous for only two years with two year old *Mysopsis* being totally shaded out by the rapid regeneration of eucalyptus. If this were not disappointing enough, we were asked to leave the premises, as the new owner did not wish us to be on his land. It would appear that since SHUMAS undertook, with contracts to cut the eucalyptus, that the owner has died and the new owners knew nothing about the massive investment to protect a water catchment and worse still had done no maintenance nor pruning. I conclude that SHUMAS for all the right reasons were unfortunate with this one as they could not have foreseen the change of tenure. In hindsight the idea of written contracts would have helped with this individual case. The far North of this province in Donga Mantung seems to be a different problem to solve.

Kimbang in Kumbo (Whiteman in Kumbo)

Executive Summary delivered to SHUMAS on 8th August 2008 as a draft to check for misunderstandings or misinterpretation.

- It was clear from the initial meeting that both FIOH(UK) and SHUMAS have almost identical ethos concerning sustainable development, the environment and the role of women in achieving rural development.

- Thank you to SHUMAS for arranging and adhering to the organised programme and providing personnel and transport to the multitude of venues.
- It is clear that SHUMAS has good working relationships with both Provincial and Local Politicians and understands the importance of working in co-operation with traditional rulers.
- I feel we have made some progress on the issue of stump removal through the websites and ideas from another NGO. Similarly water catchment officials seem to be making progress on the elimination of bracken. After arrival back in Bamenda I have a bracken article which I will attach and the website www.ifpri.org/divs/eptd/dp/eptdp65.htm a useful article concerning the impact of eucalyptus in Tigray Ethiopia and its methods of control. Perhaps fruitful avenues may be termites and fungi as natural methods of control.
- Regeneration from lateral roots remains another interconnected issue which is only solved at the moment with consistent removal of the new shoots at an early stage. This obviously happens when an individual family cares for a small/medium sized piece of land which is vital for their food production. This follow up work is less reliable in water catchments and certainly in remote watershed areas. We have been shown the range of success of the scheme from intensive cultivation to neglect, however the successes outweigh the problems by a substantial factor.
- It is important to recognise the vital economic importance that the Eucalyptus tree plays in the local economy in carpentry, construction, electricity supply and fuelwood. Despite the vital role it plays in the economy it is a credit to SHUMAS that they have managed to educate and transform public perceptions.
- It is also evident that the success of the scheme is encouraging many farmers to cut down Eucalyptus as their own private enterprise. Several people are now making an additional income from duplicating the tree nursery idea in indigenous species.
- It is unanimous from both water catchment officials and local villagers that water table levels have improved in the areas we studied and that yields have improved since the felling of Eucalyptus.
- We were shown a newly constructed school in Meluf and praise is due to SHUMAS, AID CAMPS and Schools for Africa. Hopefully this will start genuine investment in Cameroon's most precious asset its new generation of children who are not being well served by their current facilities nor arrangements to pay and attract teachers. There are some educational success stories with EUREP having enabled some families to finance education to higher levels than would have been possible prior to the project.
- Perhaps the most negative point is the lack of adherence to Health and Safety procedures in connection with felling. Whilst I am sure the training took place and the Personal Protective Equipment issued, it was not being used for a multitude of trivial reasons. I saw first hand evidence of dangerous practise in terms of the safety of the chainsaw operative and worse still children playing

alongside the felling and stump removal. Legislation about Health and Safety should be enforced to prevent serious accidents and fatalities.

- On a more positive note the growth and success of FIOH women's co-operatives was a pleasure to witness and a powerful force for change. It was at its strongest in Oku, Roh and Ntseimbang. Considerable praise to SHUMAS for their encouragement of the micro credit schemes. There was evidence throughout that there is still a long way to go in this process of gender equality.
- I have written testimonies from these women's organisations to pass on to both SHUMAS and FIOH (UK). Their content and phrasing say much about the improvement in literacy levels.
- The SHUMAS Bio farm, currently under construction 11km from Kumbo, was a delight to behold supported by Manos Unidas. A wonderful achievement which will help enormously in organic farming education and long term sustainable rural development. The bio-gas digester will prove to be a revelation as will the wind turbines when operational.
- In the far North Ntumbaw, Ndu and especially Nkambe the situation is different in both topography and politics. Are these councils totally on board as is the case in Kumbo? The landscape lends itself to more extensive pastoral agriculture therefore the imperative for politicians seems to be the protection of water catchments rather than the creation of more land for small holders.
- A chance meeting with Marcel Nformi from Ndu may prove beneficial as he has set up his own organisation Union Earth Cameroon and has been establishing small nurseries around Ndu for several years in a bottom up philosophy involving schoolchildren. He appeared well informed and offered a potential solution to stump eradication. Bruno has the contact number and it is on the accompanying photographs.
- Another idea came to mind with guttering absent on every dwelling especially new construction. The win/win of such a simple addition was clearly demonstrated in the rainy season. Even the use of some curved corrugated sheeting would allow householders to catch water thus having some additional water close to home for their use or use on plants. Causing less damp in housing, preventing erosion of areas close to their house, making footpaths more accessible and allowing women and children to do other things than constantly carrying water.
- No report in 2008 would be complete without reference to the threat posed by the spread of HIV infection. I asked only at health centres and came up with the following statistics. Cameroon is quoted as having a 5% Adult prevalence rate with The NW province having 8-11%. My photographs show the policy of compulsory testing of newly pregnant women which allows a statistical measure. At Vekovi, the nurse suggested that 1 in 10 HIV positive was a regular occurrence. At Lui the figure was more than 3 in 10. At Roh the information came in a different format with 12 cases in 2007 and so far 4 in 2008 out of a remote village population of 3,000. Whilst there could be all sorts of reasons for the anomalies in Roh's case patients might be checked at the local clinic or

more probably at the nearest local hospital in nearby Kumbo, so I suspect figures are an underestimate. The conclusion must be that this is the most worrying threat to their sustainable future.

- I conducted a series of interviews using the 20 Statements below across a sample of 46 respondents
- The scores have been analysed using a points score of + 2 for strongly agree, +1 for agree, 0 for no opinion, -1 for disagree and -2 for strongly disagree. Thus giving a range of possible totals from +92 to -92. This will allow the reader to gauge the degree of agreement and disagreement based on the rank order of responses.

Outcomes questionnaire July/August 2008

Please state your opinion on the following statements

Strongly Agree Agree No Opinion Disagree Strongly Disagree

- 1. The health of your family is better than in the past. Score +62 (11)**
- 2. Your children attend primary school on a more continuous basis. +58 (12)**
- 3. There has been an increase in attendance at Secondary School.+65 (9)**
- 4. School has become more affordable for families.+31 (19=)**
- 5. There has been an improvement in Child Mortality in this village.+53(15=)**
- 6. There are fewer cases of Water- borne diseases.+54 (14)**
- 7. There are fewer cases of Malaria.+44 (18)**
- 8. Women are more involved in decision making.+71 (5=)**
- 9. Your family has a better diet with a greater variety of foods.+66 (8)**
- 10. Springs and standpipes are flowing in the dry season (Feb)+76 (3)**
- 11. Husbands now appreciate the problem with eucalyptus.+70 (7)**
- 12. There are fewer boundary disputes than in the recent past.+52 (17)**
- 13. Families are working more co-operatively.+75 (4)**
- 14. Crop yields are increasing since the cutting of Eucalyptus.+82(1)**
- 15. Communities are working more co-operatively.+80(2)**
- 16. There has been opposition to the Eucalyptus replacement project.-31 (19=)**

17. There have been improvements in the literacy of women.+55 (13)
18. There is a growing self reliance from the EUREP project.+63 (10)
19. There is an awareness of the benefits of Organic Farming.+53 (15=)
20. News of this project has spread to other areas.+71 (5=)

106	95	82	96	130	141	65	62	115		
7	7	6	5	15	8	4	4		6	62
7	7	5	4	15	8	0	4		8	58
7	7	4	7	15	8	5	5		7	65
1	2	3	4	7	7	0	2		5	31
3	3	4	3	29	8	3	-6		6	53
5	5	1	5	27	8	2	-4		5	54
-1	2	1	5	27	7	1	0		2	44
7	2	6	5	28	8	3	4		8	71
8	5	5	3	23	8	3	4		7	66
8	6	6	5	29	8	1	7		6	76
5	2	5	4	29	8	5	7		5	70
4	5	4	4	20	8	4	3		0	52
8	5	4	5	30	8	3	4		8	75
8	7	5	6	30	8	4	8		6	82
8	6	7	6	30	8	4	4		7	80
2	-2	4	-4	-30	2	1	-5		1	-31
6	5	5	6	15	5	1	4		8	55
5	5	4	5	28	8	2	0		6	63
5	5	4	4	18	4	3	2		8	53
7	7	7	6	20	8	5	5		6	71
Vekovi	Romajai	Tayav	Meluf	Oku	Roh	Ntumbaw	Nkambe	Ntseimbang	Total	
8	8	8	8	30	8	6	8	8	8	46

Analysis of the statements in rank order.

1. Most positive response of +82 showed that wherever we went in the region the respondents were only too aware that the cutting of Eucalyptus had brought about a considerable improvement in crop yields.
2. We saw plenty of evidence to support this assertion and I am not surprised that the general response was strongly agree.
3. At +76 there is unanimity concerning the issue of water being more available in the dry season.
4. As expected this answer was in line with communities working co-operatively.
5. At +71 the respondents were certain that the news had spread about the Eucalyptus replacement.
6. Also that women were having more say in the important decisions affecting family life.
7. There was strong agreement that husbands were now aware of the damage Eucalyptus was doing to the environment.

8. Families certainly appear to be better off in terms of variation in diet compared with the outset of EUREP2.
9. Increased attendance at secondary school at +66 seems to invoke a response roughly split half agree and half strongly agree.
10. Communities argue that they have a feeling of more self reliance and control over their futures.
11. At +62 there is a strong opinion that health statistics are improving since the cutting of Eucalyptus began.
12. At +58 there was plentiful support for the view that more children were attending Primary School than was previously the case.
13. The improvement in the literacy levels of women involved in the project both orally and in written form have definitely improved.
14. At +54 this was still more than an average answer of agree that water borne diseases were becoming less frequent.
15. In turn the statistics on child mortality had shown a pleasing decrease.
16. At +53 people agreed that they understood about organic farming methods but it became clear that this was because of the high price of artificial fertilisers and necessity being the mother of invention. There is still much to do in education about the benefits of organic production and SHUMAS are doing more than most to rectify this need.
17. At+52 there was still agreement that boundary disputes had decreased since the inception of the project.
18. At +44 the question about the incidence of Malaria brought a slightly mixed response with contradictions across areas and within individual settlements.
19. School has become more affordable for families caused some consternation. It is self evident from earlier responses that more children are attending school on a more continuous basis. However they were understandably reluctant to say that this was affordable as fees were around 10,000 per annum which equates to a substantial contribution from a household with minimal access to currency as they live in a subsistence economy.
20. Finally although this comes out as a negative, it is really a double negative and therefore can be construed as a positive but only marginally. It is clear to me that there was considerable opposition at the outset of the project but that this has become less as the apparent benefits have been demonstrated over time.

I have also standardised the marking system for each village community visited and have come up with a rank order of satisfaction with the project and awareness of its benefits.

Scores are an aggregate of their responses and standardised as if 4 people had responded in each area.

1. Roh Vitangtah 141
2. Oku Area 130
3. Ntseimbang 115
4. Vekovi 106

5. Meluf	96
6. Romajai	95
7. Tayav	82
8. Ntumbaw	65
9. Nkambe	62

This rank order in itself provides a statistical insight into the success of the project with the highest degrees of satisfaction indeed delight with the improvements made being in the areas who were involved at the outset of EUREP1. The benefits full benefits of EUREP2 are as yet difficult to measure as I am convinced in a couple of years time that if the statements were to be reused then the newer areas at 7,8 and 9 in the rank order would be similarly delighted with the all round benefits of eucalyptus replacement. It is also apparent that there is a significant positive correlation between the effectiveness of the womens co-operative and position in the table of satisfaction with the replacement project. The actual individual statements and responses are included as an appendix for further reference.

Main Outcomes

In response to the brief dated the 7th May 2008

The visit was undertaken by Alan and Teresa Stewart of 11 Orchard Grove Swindon SN2 7QR. We are both experienced teachers and have had further experience of visiting and assisting a school in NW Uganda, as recently as 2006. Alan also underwent significant training in chainsaw operation and First Aid to establish safe working practices. Alan is also Head of Geography at a local college with an obvious interest in current affairs and environmental issues. Teresa is a SENCO at a local Primary school with a specialism in care for those with learning difficulties and the physically disabled.

AIMS

To assess the extent to which the main outcomes and cross cutting outcomes have been achieved.

EDUCATION Children will gain improved access to primary education and adults especially women will benefit from training and become more self reliant.

We saw plentiful evidence that in Ntseimbang and Meluf new schools had been recently constructed and were providing an environment more conducive to education than the previous accommodation. This major improvement in infrastructure is to be welcomed and praise is due to the eucalyptus replacement project, THE BIG LOTTERY FUND, SHUMAS, AID CAMPS and SCHOOLS FOR AFRICA for what is a marvellous achievement. I also do not have the slightest of doubt that these new schools will attract more pupils as we witnessed the chairman of the PTA and Headteacher wrestling with the problems of over subscription and insufficient desks. The accompanying photographs show the contrast in facilities and it is to be hoped that such an improvement will stimulate the Ministry of Education and nearby schools to improve their infrastructure in order to compete. SHUMAS as an NGO would appear to be doing a marvellous job in improving the quality of school places however the wider picture reveals under

investment. The government school simply appoints and pays a headteacher whereas the PTA seems to be responsible for the rest of the teaching staff. I have evidence that they budget to pay these teachers 100,000CFC per annum when the minimum wage is supposed to be 338,592CFC. The question remains not are more children attending both primary and secondary schools? Rather what is the quality of education they are receiving when they get there? especially when staff are paid less than a third of the highly aspirational minimum wage and children are cramped into tiny classrooms in groups which commonly exceed 50. There is a funding crisis in education which is outlined in the accompanying newsletter from the Bishop of Kumbo and when 41.1% of the population is under 14(CIA Statistics) this looks set to worsen. All the more praise to SHUMAS as a local NGO who appear to be achieving some success in this difficult area.

The second aim was answered in a positive way as we brought back several personal testimonies, the majority written in fact some word processed by women. These women have benefited from encouragement and training from SHUMAS and FIOH. They have been given assistance on how to run meetings, take accurate minutes and key points. We saw first hand how many womens groups were saving through the SHUMAS monitored scheme in order to plan and finance improvements in their village communities. The frame work they work to is one of submitting a plan for approval and there is now the possibility of applying for funding from SHUMAS who have 2.1 million CFC to loan gained from charitable donations.(Don't get carried away its only just over £2,000.) If approved then money can be borrowed at a very small rate of interest so that the micro credit scheme can be continuously operated. Groups have adopted this idea for themselves buying items in bulk like cooking oil and soap and borrowing with a pay back of 2.5%. Even this profit is redistributed within the womens group in kind at Christmas time. Clearly these groups are now functioning at a higher level of sophistication than would have been thought possible only a few years ago. Much has been done through the hard work and dedication of these pioneering women. The classic quote from M. Thomas is that he is pleased with the tone and development in these speeches as they appear to have made progress in such a short time from the typical begging letter and wish list, to organising and planning then implementing themselves. Clear evidence of increased self reliance. Some groups have rapidly recognised the importance of this and have appointed efficient Adult Literacy Co-ordinators.

HEALTH Women and children's health improves as they suffer less from local diseases. Health and safety issues are recognised as salient from the outset.

The first part of this is relatively straightforward to quantify from the statement survey across most of the accessible villages affected by the project. I reiterate that the answers to the health related statements were extremely positive as they thought crop yields were up +82, water availability +76, +62 on health being generally better, more specifically +54 agree with fewer water borne diseases, +53 of improvements in child mortality and +44 with a reduction in cases of Malaria. Whilst discussing these areas with qualified and trained health workers both doctors and nurses it was clear that the project had brought about

the desirable cross cutting outcomes which we had hoped for and anticipated in our situation analysis. However circumstances change and another health risk is of great concern in this region HIV infection. I have forwarded websites such as UNAIDS and AVERT to assist in the continued education message as statistics such as human prevalence rates appear very worrying and are perhaps the greatest threat to the sustainability of these communities. It was clear that womens groups were offering support, understanding and sound advice to those brave enough to discuss their HIV positive status. Women who are embarrassed by discussing this within a large group are offered a small support group meeting informally in each others homes so that the whole community does not have to know. They also ensure that they have good information about the importance of a varied and balanced diet and correct medication in order to control the disease. Most of these women arrive after being surprised by their status when compulsorily tested as a result of a pregnancy. It is pleasing to note that official statistics for infection have improved incrementally from the worst figure in 1999(6.2%) showing a decrease in every year to the current national statistic of (5.1%). I understand that the figures for the NW, as the second poorest region of Cameroon, are much worse than this and therefore the disease represents an important barrier to progress here. It is coincidental that the statistic has improved during the time scale of the project but it clearly cannot do much harm for wives to be present at home more frequently which is one of the outcomes of the project.

We visited health centres and patients during our visit and saw some wonderfully dedicated staff having to cope in accommodation which was the result of action by womens groups but lacked the standards of hygiene, access to drugs and equipment that would bring confidence to the community and transform mortality rates. Again this limited health care can be viewed as a spin off from the project as it would not be there but for the dedication of these womens groups to fight for their rights.

Health and Safety issues are not on the top of any agenda item. I had experienced this in Uganda and anticipated the same in Cameroon. Unfortunately this was the case as when you examine transport, most vehicles are not road worthy and nobody wears a seat belt. The photos of chainsaws I include could have been taken anywhere in the region at least 1000 fold. No use of personal protective equipment in spite of having the training and being issued with the kit. A plethora of excuses abounded but the bottom line is they were not concerned about their own safety despite the conditions in health centres and reaction in this society to the disabled. My photographs reveal worse as the operatives displayed a disregard for the safety of others as well as themselves operating unsafe practices and without an automatic cut off brake in the event of kickback. Firm legislation by government is required here as an outsider would conclude that life is cheap here. The director of SHUMAS came up with the idea of cancelling contracts of employment if they were observed in the field without using the correct equipment. A noble suggestion but I fear unworkable in a country with scant disregard for laws designed to improve health and safety. This was the only major

negative in my assessment of the project and it could have repercussions in terms of public opinion.

Natural Resources Women gain access to farming land closer to their homes and improve agricultural output. Increased biodiversity produces a more robust environment.

Again part one of this aim is relatively easy to quantify as from my survey at +82, which equates to an almost universal strongly agree. The respondents confirmed that with their number one answer that the cutting of Eucalyptus had brought direct and quantifiable improvements in crop yields. We saw first hand how many women in the Council owned Tayav area were now gaining enormous benefit from farming closer to home approximately 1 km. rather than the arduous journey to Nkuf to farm which necessitated overnight stays and a 15km trek both ways carrying both young children and produce. These women are incredibly strong both physically and mentally to have undertaken this journey where I suspect even Olympic athletes would balk at the training. We observed the same gratitude for clearing the Eucalyptus in all the small communities we visited and the additional photographic evidence provided shows this as a major effect of the project. We were inundated with gifts of produce as a thank you for the improvement made in a crucial and vital natural resource. In a subsistence economy access to productive farmland is paramount to survival. The way in which these women and their children had grasped this new opportunity is clearly shown by their unequivocal success in eliminating Eucalyptus from their individual plot. When we witnessed the results of lack of follow up in terms of secondary regeneration from both stumps and lateral roots then it was clear what a determined effort these women had put into intensively farming their new piece of land.

As to the second statement I have no doubt that a diverse environment will be more adaptable to change in terms of changing climate. This comes straight from the theory of Biological Legacy. If the majority of Eucalyptus Plantations were to be replaced by the variety of at least 35 indigenous species, which we witnessed in nurseries, then the environment would become more robust. In fact I am convinced this is happening in what they call catchment areas but which should more accurately be called Riparian Zones or Riparian Buffers. The concept being in terms of clean water resources that if you protect the land adjacent to the spring or stream with a substantial amount of tree species then these trees will take up any excess nutrients and also trap surface run off thus preventing soil erosion and allowing for better water quality to supply villagers. It seems that we can do much as we like with the rest of the drainage basin as long as we protect the water quality with a substantial riparian buffer. However much of what I saw leads me to the conclusion that most of the land cleared will go into productive agriculture which will not necessarily improve species diversity. In fact I must conclude that we witnessed an almost total absence of wildlife as the land area of Littoral, SW, W and NW regions of Cameroon were almost totally devoted to harnessing photosynthesis for the benefit of one species *Homo Sapiens*. Whether this be small scale subsistence agriculture to feed the 18 million Cameroonians or the

vast plantations we saw of Palm Oil, Bananas, Tea, Rubber, and Eucalyptus organised /introduced by previous colonial powers. There would appear to be very few areas of the country where nature has priority, we only observed the wonderful natural remnant of rainforest that is Mount Oku on slopes completely inaccessible to mankind and clearly a last sanctuary of primates. We also witnessed a caring programme for orphan primates in Limbe. Caring for young primates orphaned by the trade in bush meat. In conclusion this project has the potential to benefit the natural environment but I fear it will be a slow recovery. The new species of tree grown from seed in the various nurseries clearly give hope of a variety of herbal and medicinal benefits and this knowledge has as yet not been lost.

HUMAN RIGHTS There will be less conflict in family relationships and communities.

Answers from my survey would support this assertion that considerable benefits have accrued beyond the actual cutting of eucalyptus. The number two answer with a score of +80 meant that across every village where we interviewed the response was strongly agree to the assertion that both communities and families are working together more co-operatively. We also achieved a +71 statistic about women being more involved in the decision-making process. The question about reduction in boundary disputes actually came out as +52 which equates to universal agreement that the clearance of eucalyptus has brought additional benefits to the community in terms of a reduction in boundary disputes concerning lateral roots spreading. All these cross cutting outcomes plus a few more that were unforeseen have brought considerable improvements to the quality of life for rural dwellers in the Bui and Donga Mantung districts. Of course what remains impossible to measure is what effect this has had on migration to Kumbo the nearest town Pop 116,000, Bamenda the regional capital Pop 446,000(stats from Wikipedia 2001 estimates). The whole idea of integrated rural development is to slow the migration effect to the nearest town and regional centre.

Major outcomes were the targets of cutting 1,000,000 Eucalyptus trees during the programme. Whilst physically impossible to measure on a 16 day visit and totally impossible to access in the wet season, I can only conclude that I saw and witnessed the deforestation of large areas and with local expertise was able to differentiate between EUREP1 and EUREP2. There is also the issue of private enterprise copying what is certainly a successful scheme. Our professional guides could I am sure have claimed credit for more eucalyptus cutting than they did. Add to this the constant deforestation that is born out of a subsistence economy where your only way of making cash is to chop eucalyptus and sell it at the road side and you have a monumental task to quantify the number of actual trees felled. In view of the integrity and diversity of projects initiated by SHUMAS I am prepared to trust them on the evidence witnessed. They were totally up front in showing me a multitude of success stories and the occasional disappointment particularly in Nkambe.

As to the target for seedlings the claim on the photograph of 1.5 million seedlings has been exceeded 1.8 million with a clever scheme to replace any seedlings which failed to take. This was from the single Kumbo Nursery and we witnessed several other councils following the project and many private individuals now making a living wage from the rearing of indigenous trees.

Water tables have been transformed as a result of the reduction in this invasive tree. The statistic of +76 being the third highest score in the survey and almost unanimity on water tables, standpipes and springs being more available at the end of the dry season which has almost eliminated the water borne mode of infection.

Womens groups continue to demonstrate a remarkable capacity for organisational structures which are assisting their communities and some financial assistance has been forthcoming to assist this process.

SHUMAS have built their own capacity with a highly skilled and dedicated team working to a common ethos. They are well managed in terms of their structure and powers are delegated appropriately with a good gender balance. SHUMAS are functioning well and clearly recognise the importance of working with National, Regional and Local politicians without forgetting the importance of traditional rulers in the equation. They look to be going from strength to strength with their joint initiatives of new premises in conjunction with a new centre for the physically disabled. Vocational training that we witnessed in action in Bamenda market. In addition the New SHUMAS Bio Farm built with funding from Manos Unidas will become a hub central to the education of Cameroonians about the benefits of Organic Farming and renewable energy. I am convinced it will become a beacon of excellence and that this is an NGO we should support further as it is making a major contribution to the lives of the disadvantaged in the two most disadvantaged regions of Cameroon.

When we were granted an interview with the Mayor of Kumbo as a matter of courtesy as we were working in his area. We were delayed as he was already in a meeting with a UK MP. Subsequent research reveals her to be the Liberal democrat MP for Falmouth and Cambourne (Julia Goldsworthy) who has the brief of Parliamentary advisor on VSO. As a relevant appendix I attach a weblink where Julia Goldsworthy laments the state of Cameroon councils. This makes the achievements of SHUMAS all the more remarkable when taken in context.