

2005 WORLD WETLAND DAY PREPARATION AND ACTIVITIES IN, BAMENDA CAMEROON (Reported by Chi Napoleon Forpah Email:nforpah@yahoo.fr,Tel;237 7928201/7575693)

INTRODUCTION

Two main activities marked the 2005 world wetland day in Bamenda, Mezam Division of the North West Province Cameroon:(1)A field trip was organized on the 7th of January,2005 to Lake Awing (a potential Ramsar Site) (2) Distribution and forwarding of a wetland sector publication (www.ramsar.org/wwd2004_rpt_cameroon1.htm) to students,and key stakeholders.

METHODS

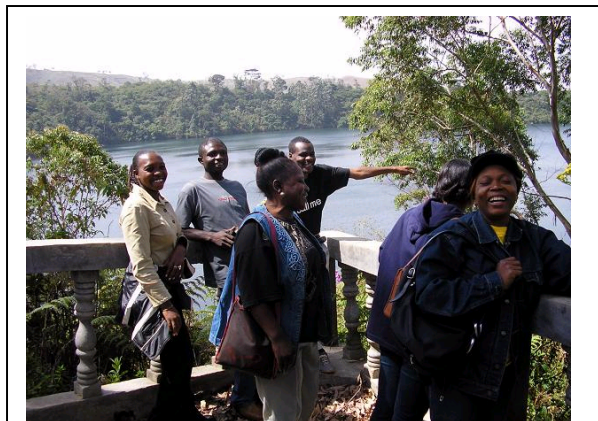
Field trip/Excursion,briefing on the use of the Geographical Positioning System (GPS),Lectures, debates and photography.

ACTIVITIES/RESULTS

(1)FIELD TRIP

Students of the Environmental Sciences and Water Resources Management (ESWRM) department of the Bamenda University of Science and Technology (BUST) were led to Lake Awing by, Mr Azong Moses (PhD student in ITC,Netherlands),Dr Allo Allo Andrew (Head of department ESWRM) and Mr Chi Napoleon Forpah (part time lecturer in the ESWRM department).

Lake Awing is located within the Bafut Ngemba Forest Reserve ,occupies a surface area of about 4km square. It is one of the many crater lakes found along the Cameroon volcanic line, and is just about 300m besides the imposing Mount Lefo (attitude of about 3000m above sea level)



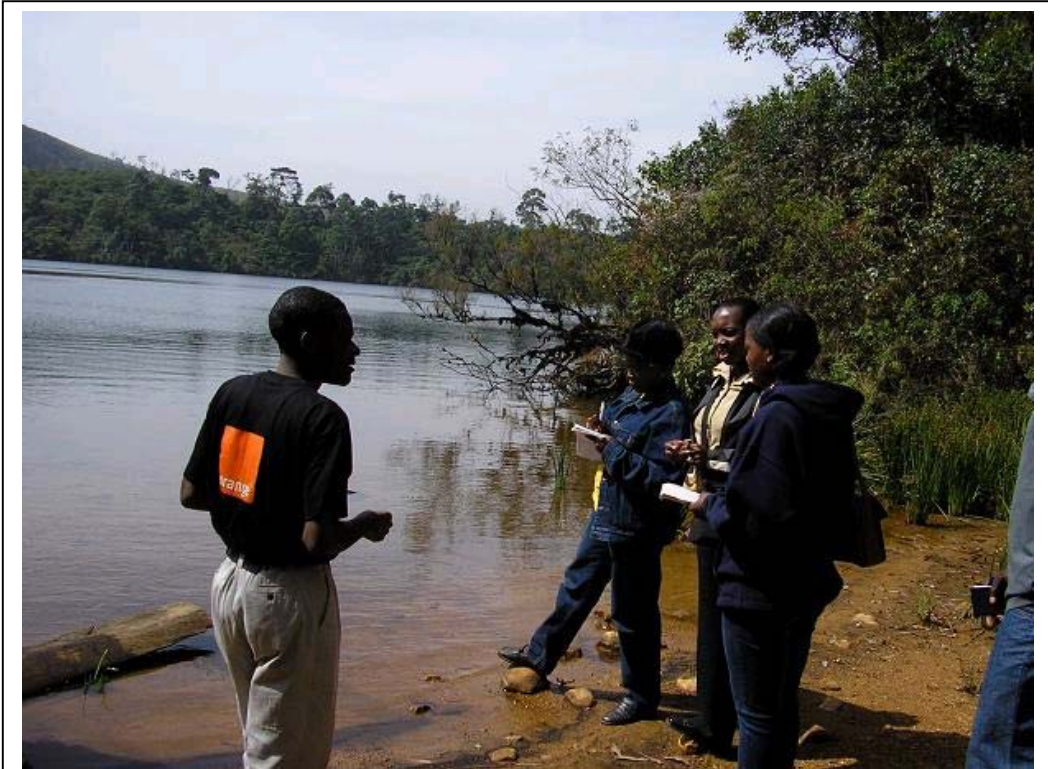
Appreciation Lake Biodiversity,by Students of BUST

At the lake side, Dr Allo presented a brief history of the lake. It is believed that the lake 'migrated' from Bambili-a neighbouring village because it was being shabbily treated (used as dumping ground for refuse, used pads etc).When Awing people die their souls move to the lake and it is perhaps for the reason that at certain times in the night it is common to find the lake being replaced by a city with lights with people doing their normal activities. Corpses are hardly transported to through the lake road to the village reasons being that it usually provokes the ancestral spirits found in the lake. On the other hand, lake Awing is a source of water for farming and drinking by the about 100,000 inhabitants of the Santa area .Yearly sacrifices are being offered to the lake by the the Awing traditional authority, headed by the paramount Fon of Awing.

After the historical briefing, by Dr Allo,Mr Azong –the August quest of honour introduced and thrilled students on the practical use and importance of the GPS .Demonstrations on tracking and location of lake boundaries then followed. Mr Azong also spiced his discussion with concrete examples of some of the goods and services provided by the lake. Mr Chi, taking his turn of discussion introduced the basic principle of wetland management planning and link it to the giant Community based eco-tourism project, earmarked by the Ndong Awing Cultural and Development Association (NACDA) as a kind of poverty alleviation strategy for the about 35,000 inhabitants .Students were opportune to view the grey heron –a typical wetland bird with the use of a pair of binocular.

ISSUES

Debates were centered on the following issues:(1) whether to allow dead wood in the forest for mosses, lichens etc to thrive on or permit the local inhabitants to collect it as fuel-wood (2) Question of gradual replacement of the about 3238ha of eucalyptus forest around the lake or allow it fuel-wood ,timber etc. (3) Some students wondered how the proposed project will safeguard the role of the lake as a shrine and remarked that the lake as a shrine is good local conservation strategy of preserving and respecting the lake. (4)Then came the question of whether all the proposals or projects for the lake area have undergone and environmental impact assessment (EIA).



Introduction to Wetland Management Planning within the Lake Area by Mr Chi Napoleon Forpah, to Students of Environmental Sciences ,of the Bamenda University of Science and Technology (BUST), Cameroon

NB.It may be important to note here that, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)(of which Cameroon is a signatory),the Ramsar Convention recognize impact assessment, as an important tool to help plan and implement development with biodiversity in mind (International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA) publication, November 2005).

(2) DISTRIBUTION OF WETLAND SECTOR PUBLICATION.

About,150 publications were distributed on the 2nd February 2005.Some stakeholders had their copies through the internet and acknowledged.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Projects proposed within the lake area should precede with an EIA. There already exist a Prime Ministerial decree No.2005/0577/PM of 25th /February 2005 fixing modalities for the realization of of EIA and an Arrete 0068/MINEP of 08 March 2005 fixing the different categories of operations whose realization must precede by an EIA.
- Projects and programmes within the lake area should follow the multi-actor and ecosystem approach, with a very clear benefit sharing mechanism.