

Reported by Chi Napoleon Forpah, Project Team Leader, Wetland Project in the Douala Estuary and Lake Ossa Complex, Cameroon.

The Watershed Task Group (WTG) and Partners (EDCIF & CBC) (*Bp 13026 Douala, Tel: 237 5405260/7704612 Email:wtgcam@yahoo.co.uk*) celebrated the 2007, World Wetlands Day (WWD) principally with the Environmental Club of National Bilingual College (NABICO), Bonaberi, in the Douala Estuary.

The *main activities* included (1) Poster presentations/classroom lectures on the origin/meaning of the WWD 2007 theme “wetlands are important for fish productivity-protect them”, and then the role of mangrove forest ecosystems in fisheries productivity (2) Launching of the pioneer Edition of the **Cameroon Wetlands Forum**, a Newsletter produced and published by WTG & Partners with support from the NC-IUCN/SWP (see copy attached to report) (3) Two hours Radio Talk Show over Radio Environment of the IUCN-ROCA in Yaoundé on an Institute de Recherche pour le Developpement (IRD) funded mangrove sensitization project titled – ‘**Plein feu sur la mangrove**’ implemented by the Centre for Environment Watch (CEW)-project holder, in collaboration with Watershed Task Group (WTG) and the Cameroon Mangrove Conservation Network (4) Announcement of the Children’s Art Contest, 2007 on conservation and restoration of mangroves.

The *key results*: (1) School children (youths) were very inspired (as remarked from their responses on addressing some threats to wetland resources like the fisheries discussed) and recognized that they can significantly contribute in reducing threats like **over exploitation of mangrove timber and decline in fisheries** by convincing their parents some of whom are mangrove exploiters, fishermen and well placed decision makers. The children were made to understand that they are the future wetland resources managers, users and decision makers and that it will be very ridiculous for their own children to grow and be shown mangroves or some fish species in picture or posters and not in their natural state as is the case now.

NABICO extended their wetland club activities up till the 11th of February, 2007, National Youth Day where they grabbed the **first position in Environmental Club activities competition between various participating schools in the Douala Estuary.** (2) Copies of the Cameroon Wetlands Forum (which contains a briefing on the World Wetland Day and the Ramsar Convention) were widely distributed (3) The mangrove sensitization project ‘plein feu sur la mangrove’ was successfully launched and sensitization meetings/seminars will continue for the next two months in three state Universities (Yaoundé, Douala and Buea), schools and colleges in the Littoral, Centre and South West provinces of Cameroon with the hope of developing a school curriculum on mangrove ecosystems in Cameroon. (4) The **Children’s Art Contest, 2007**—a fun and exciting Art Contest for Children 7 to 13 years old was announced and is being promoted in schools by NABICO Environmental Club and WTG & Partners. *<We invite all primary school children from tropical and sub-tropical nations, and whose schools are located near mangroves, to create art telling us “ Why are Conservation & restoration of Mangroves Important to my Community?” Selected winners will be published in a 2008 MAP mangrove Art Calendar to be distributed Internationally to raise awareness of mangrove forest ecology- this project is promoted by Mangrove Action Project-project holder. P.O .BOX 1854, Port Angeles, WA, 98362, USA Email: monicaquarto@hotmail.com or mangroveap@olympus.net Tel/Fax(360) 452 5866 (Deadline April 15, 2007)*

Generally the children were drilled on some of the **products** from the mangrove **plants** (timber, firewood, poles, fish traps and mangrove **ecosystems** (honey/wax, recreation, food (prawns, crabs, fin fish etc). The Cameroon Radio and Television Vision (www.crtv.cm) projected at 10pm a 52 minutes documentary produced in collaboration with WTG & Partners titled “**Wetlands are not Waste Lands**”.

WWD, 2007 activities in the Douala Estuary had as resource persons Mr Chi Napoleon Forpah and Mr Chekoua Justin of WTG and partners and In Yaounde, Dr Roger Ngoufo and Mr Achille of CEW and Miss Ngameni Sylvie Kuetche of WTG.

Recommendations: (1) Urgent need for Mangrove Regeneration or restoration initiatives to enhance the ongoing sensitization efforts and to gradually reverse the threats to mangrove ecosystems (2) Systematic Impact Assessment of Oil and Gas Explorations on mangrove ecosystem in the Douala Estuary and beyond (3) Lobbying and advocacy with the government for the creation of exclusive rights of use in a bid to keep the commercial Timber Companies out of the mangroves (4) Ensuring sustainable aquaculture development within the framework of the FAO code of conduct for the Responsible Fisheries which will enhance the sectoral contribution to food security, poverty alleviation and rural development (FAO, 200)



2007 WWD classroom lectures.



An integrated fish pond at Bonendale, Douala Estuary under realization with the supervision WTG & Partners by COVIBOL Common Initiative Group. Here a piggery is erected on a fish pond and fingerlings enter the fish pond naturally from a tributary of the Wouri River.