

EF-to-EF Mentorship program between La Fondation pour le Tri-National de la Sangha (FTNS) and Fondation des Savanes Ouest Africaines (FSOA)

Project K: RedLAC-CAFÉ Knowledge for Action Project

Mentor Fund:

La Fondation pour le Tri-National de la Sangha (FTNS)

Mentee Fund:

La Fondation des Savanes Ouest Africaines (FSOA)

Theme:

Regionalisation of financial mechanism

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Case Study

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1. Introduction

Project K is supported by the French Fund for Global Environment, Mava Foundation and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), through United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). It is designed to enhance financial innovations portfolios of the Trust Funds members of RedLac and CAFE in order to face the challenges of preservation, environment management and climate change.

In this context, the foundation of West African Savannah (FSOA) answered to a call for project in the field of “EF-to-EF Mentorship Program of RedLAC-CAFE Knowledge for Action Project – Project K”. The project approved by RedLAC for amount US\$ 30,000,000, seeks to make the FSOA profit from the experience of the Foundation for Sangha Tri-national in order to more clearly identify the issues and steps of regionalisation of its financial mechanism.

The objective of the current document, prepared and approved by both implicated foundations, is to share the experience of mentorship with the other funds members of RedLac and CAFE. It consolidates the major achievements of FNTS mentorship that can be operable for the FSOA in its expansion to Burkina Faso and Niger.

2. Executive overview

The main activities led in the frame of the mentorship that are the exchange trip with the mentor (FNTS) in Cameroon, external expertise and sub-regional workshop (Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger) were a great success. Through the program, the FSOA (mentored) can clearly identify the issues and steps of regionalising its financial mechanism which has had significant progress. The expansion process of the FSOA sustainable funding mechanism to the whole Complex “WAP” (W-Arly-Pendjari) was clearly identified in terms of mandatory changes to make as well as administrative arrangements to take in Burkina Faso and Niger. A roadmap which defines practical ways of implementation (charges, terms etc...) was adopted by state authorities.

Created on the will of three countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger), FSOA is for the moment statutory and operatively well “Benin impacted”. On the contrary of FTNS which is created as tri-national, expansion of FSOA to the two other countries remains a challenge. Sustainable funding of preservation of the Complex WAP, invaluable shared heritage, could only be the fruit of a strong political commitment of all three concerned countries. Nobody could impose it.

3. Context

In December 2000, Governments of Cameroon, Republic of Central African Republic and Republic of Congo took a decisive step in achieving their commitment by through signature of a cooperation agreement for the implementation and the management of a transborder forest complex called the Tri-national of Sangha (TNS). The TNS consists of three national parks - Lobeke (Cameroon), Dzanga-Ndoki (Central African Republic) and Nouabale-Ndoki (Congo) – and their surrounding areas.

Authorities of the three countries recognised the necessity to enhance long term financing of preservation activities in the TNS and together with partners identified the possibility to establish a trust fund for the Environment. The foundation for the Tri-national of Sangha (FTNS) was created in March 2007 as a private Charity under English Law called Sangha Trust Fund Limited.

FSOA was created in October 2012. It is also a registered in England as a private limited company and obtained the status of Charity. The Foundation was established by two founding members: The Ministry of Finance of Benin and the International Union for Nature Preservation (IUCN) whose representatives are part of a General Assembly. The foundation aims to promote for public utility preservation of i) biodiversity in the biosphere reserve of Pendjari, ii) Benin side of transborder biosphere reserve of “W”, and iii) **the transboundary area of a savannah ecosystem known as “WAP” (W-Arly-Pendjari) extending over nearly 30,000 sq. km in Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger.** The WAP complex is on the UNESCO World Heritage list since July 2017.

FTNS and FSOA are therefore pioneering Conservation Trust Funds (CTF) with a sub-regional focus on sustainable financing for biodiversity conservation in three countries. But to date, the FSOA has only one functional desk in Benin. The FTNS, for its part, is an effective cross- border environmental fund and **a model for the development of innovative and sustainable financing mechanisms for protected areas extending over several countries.** As mentor, it could provide concrete answers and inform the FSOA Board of Directors on the changes needed to become a Regional Trust Fund, across three countries.

4. Objectives of the Mentorship

The Mentorship FTNS – FSOA tends to promote expansion of FSOA to the «transborder complex WAP» by introducing necessary rearrangements to evolve into a tri-national level.

The expected results were:

- A “FSOA regionalisation” roadmap is defined on the basis of the experiences of the FTNS.
- Operational planning is being implemented during the period 2017-2020.
- The governments of Burkina Faso and Niger are committed to the sustainable financing process of the FSOA and are mobilizing financial contributions for the endowment fund.

5. Activities

After a run-up to the mentorship deemed to clarify the Terms of Reference, a mission composed of 6 members (4 Trustees of FSOA, The Executive Director and his Technical Assistant) went to Cameroon to meet FTNS related parties (Trustees, Executive Direction, Financial and technical partners, National Parks Managers) and to learn from their sub- regional and transborder experience. Basing on the trip's objectives, FNTS gathered the parties with whom discussions allowed to bring answers to the issues of regionalization of FSOA (Rf. Report if mission to Cameroon, 14th – 23rd march 2017). The discussions were based on the core of the profession of both foundations (committed on the mentorship) and were built from six components of practical standards considered as essential to the development of Conservation Trust Funds (CTF) efficacy.

On the basis of the outcomes in Cameroon, FSOA entered into contract with (Mrs Mikitin), Expert in preservation funding, to implement the roadmap for “regionalization of FSOA” from June 24th – July 1st, 2017.

Furthermore, FSOA organised from 28th – 29th June 2017 in Cotonou, a joint workshop hosted by the expert above-named for sharing FTNS experiences with actors implicated in Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger. There were 17 participants to the workshop from Benin (3), Burkina Faso (5), Niger (4) and FSOA (5). The quality of representations was appreciated through effective participation of Directors, Heads of Ministry Cabinet (Environment and Finance) of the three countries sharing the WAP.

6. Challenges

The way to the organisational development of FSOA seems well engaged, but it leads for the moment to only one institution able to serve National Parks in the north of Benin. In fact, FSOA should primarily test in a full scale the functioning of its support mechanism in Benin, but its experience of manager's evaluation and provision funding need to be valued once its activities will cover the transborder complex.

In terms of governance and operational management, the coming up entry of new “shareholders», with the expansion to Niger and Burkina Faso, will be a major challenge for the FSOA, which the FTNS has already addressed in the last 10 years.

The mentorship will allow to more clearly identify the main issues that the geographical expansion of FSOA will raise regarding the needs for tri-nations joint management. It is based on preparing a strategic plan by taking into account the steps already made by FTNS and studying financial, administrative, institutional and legal difficulties that FSOA could face. The main idea is that FTNS could give specific answers and inform the Trustees on the groundwork to undertake. Among the key questions, the following were dealt as a priority in the frame of the mentorship:

- Which institution will be representative and efficient to design the new system of transborder funding (a governance board with representatives from the three country members and Parks of the WAP, the FSOA Board of Directors)?
- To whom will this organization report its progress?
- Which model of Trust Fund for preservation of regional biodiversity is the most suitable (national counters and a counter for common transborder activities)?
- What kind of management board will be the most impartial (A board of Directors for decisions related to the management of all counters or a board of Directors who decide for transborder activities and supported by a committee for supervision of national activities)?
- Which changes will be necessary in the statuses of FSOA to inter Niger and Burkina Faso?
- What are the needs of funding of the national parks W and Arly Burkina Faso and W- Niger?
- What are the management activities that will need joint decisions making and how will they be planned?
- Who will be responsible of fundraising for the various national “counters”?

A significant renovation of FSOA is required to move up to a status of regional Trust Fund for preservation. From this perspective, it will be question to follow a process of creation of a new trust fund for preservation which could rise in 5 or 7 years. The experience shared from FTNS should allow to undertake activities to build a “regional FSOA” for 2020.

7. Main outcomes achieved

The study trip to Cameroon with FTNS allowed to draw a roadmap of the regionalization process of FSOA. It was also an occasion to identify the main changes that FSOA should undertake in terms of objectives, legal status, implementation of the process in the three countries (Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger), management structure, strategy of fundraising, conditions of eligibility to benefit of funds, etc.

On the basis of FTNS experiences and inspiring on the outcomes of the exchange trip to Cameroon, an external consultant (K. Mikitin) support FSOA to set the process of its expansion to the to the whole “WAP Complex” and the specific details of rearrangements of the foundation in order to achieve a regional level. She permitted the adoption and appropriation by the board of Directors of a “FSOA profile” which offers a cohesive framework to guide the next steps in the process of regionalization.

During the sub-regional workshop organised by FSOA in Cotonou and facilitated by K. Mikitin, the learnings taken from FTNS experiences (steering of the regionalization process, governance structures, financial terms, grant program, fundraising strategy) were the heart of the debates in order to build together the regional profile of FSOA.

At the end of fruitful discussions on technical and administrative considerations, a detailed roadmap for each country, added with the procedures to undertake by FSOA in Benin was adopted by representatives of the three countries.

The main stakeholders have presently an operational plan for 2018-2020 to implement the «FSOA regionalisation», which has been adapted for each country concerned.

8. Benefits

The discussions focus on FTNS experiences which cover all the concerns raised by FSOA. For each element of the standards of practises of the Preservation Trust Fund, the outcomes were presented as proposal to FSOA:

- Back-up bodies of regionalisation of FSOA;
- Steering (monitoring authority) of the process of regionalisation;
- Structure of political policy of a regional FSOA;
- Constitution of governance bodies for a regional FSOA;
- Operational sub-regional organisation for the three countries;
- Policy of assets management for the three countries;

- Methods of implementing the grant program in National Parks, buffer zones and at the level transboundary;
- Restructuring of the Executive Management of FSOA;
- Strategy of fundraising in each country.

These outcomes will facilitate and speed up reforms of FSOA in terms of regionalization of its mechanism of sustainable funding.

As for FTNS, the Mentor, the discussions allowed it to review its own practices on the scale of its three countries member and to develop a self-critic appreciation which should help to improve its design, approach, management and monitoring.

9. Remaining challenges

The roadmap adopted as a tool for the institutional development of a “sub-regional FSOA” will be a major strategic challenge in the coming 5 years. As a vast and laborious open project, it will need many more efforts to achieve:

- Tri-national agreement, creation of a single “multinational fund” with separate counter for each protected area, and practical details for handling cross-border initiatives, etc.;
- Statutory change in United Kingdom, and consideration of options for a possible move to the current registered country;
- Relocation, restructuring and recompositing of the Executive Management, responsibilities and composition of the General Assembly, the Board of Directors, ad'hoc committees, etc.;
- Analysis of the financial gaps in the protected areas and the operating costs of FSOA in order to have a preliminary estimate of the endowment fund to be mobilized, the modalities for mobilizing potential sources of financing and revenues at the national, sub regional and cross-border levels;
- New operations manual to define the details of examining and the types of activities and projects that will be supported by FSOA, through a transparent and participatory process on how to prioritize national and cross-border activities to be funded.

The lessons learned from the experiences of the FTNS have been fully relevant for FSOA, as the similarities between the both Foundations are so important. But from its inception, FTNS has had a clearly stated tri-national vocation in its statutes, in terms of objectives where the three National Parks are placed at the same level and cross-border activities are explicitly addressed, and in terms of governance where the three Govern-

ments have the right to appoint a member of the Board of Directors. This position was confirmed in 2008 by the signing of a Collaboration Agreement with CAR, Congo and Cameroon.

Unfortunately, FSOA has a strong national connotation, through its headquarters in Cotonou, and its Statutes which give pride of place to Benin's National Parks and stakeholders. In addition, it has already started its grants program in Benin. The other two countries, despite their apparent determination, are reluctant to join a project that seems to them to be largely «Benin stamped». They are well aware that resource mobilization can only be a collaborative effort, and that the principle of a single, regional endowment fund opens up serious prospects for sustainability in WAP management. But the issues

discussed at the sub regional workshop, and the inertia observed since, raise concerns about the real political will to combine the efforts of the three countries to build a common CTF.

10. Learnings

The main lesson to learn is that FSOA, as do FTNS, since its creation should be conceived at the level of the three countries. The fact that Benin is the founding member of FSOA results in some weaknesses that will be technically difficult to correct. **Only a strong political will and a high-level commitment at the top of the three States could allow the event, as early as possible, of a tri-national FSOA (3 years).**



The FSOA team visits the Mefou National Park with the FTNS Executive Director.



The FSOA Executive Director and President impressed by the trees of the Mefou National Park.



Workshop on regionalization of FSOA financing mechanism, Cotonou.

