

# Report on the trial training session on awareness training with communities for CFZ conservators.

23 and 25 May 2025

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## Context

It has been noted during various conversations and training sessions that there is a lack of awareness amongst the CFZ conservators about why they are doing their job, what they are protecting and how they can better transmit those messages to the local communities rather than just restricting or prohibiting certain activities. Thus, helping to reduce the conflict between conservators and communities.

A training session was developed to enable the conservators to understand the importance of the environment, what the benefits it provides and what the threats to it are, particularly with reference to plants. These questions were posed through a lens of how to do awareness training with communities and why it is important to do this. The session was conducted over half a day to accommodate people travelling in from the antennae. Two half-day sessions were held on 23 and 25 May 2024 at the CFZ office, Nzérékoré with 15 participants in each session.

## Content and methodology

Following the first session, we decided to add a questionnaire to the second group. Before the session started the second group were given a questionnaire with six questions to answer (see results). This questionnaire was given out at the end of the session to see if there had been improvement, and the answers were talked through with the group to make sure that everyone understood.

The session was participative using questions posed to the conservators, plenary discussions, small group discussions. The session covered the following topics:

The importance of awareness training:

- What do you understand by awareness training?
- Why do we do awareness training?
- What is the importance of awareness training?
- How can we do awareness training?

We then asked them what three key phrases meant to them and how they would explain it to a member of the community.

- Climate change
- Ecosystem services
- Extinction

The participants were then split into groups of 4 or 5 to discuss three cards showing ecosystem services (see example below). We asked the following questions:



- What the picture represents?
- what is the advantage or disadvantage for humans?
- What actions could negatively affect the advantage or alleviate the disadvantage?

Each group then chose a reporter and present the answers in a plenary session. The other groups were invited to ask questions or comment to increase the debate up to the break.

After the break, a similar exercise was done with cards representing threats to the environment e.g. slash and burn agriculture, charcoal production, overgrazing, mining etc. (see example below).



Quel est l'avantage pour les humains ici?

QUELLES ACTIONS POURRAIENT AFFECTER NÉGATIVEMENT CET AVANTAGE ?

Figure 1: example of an ecosystem services discussion card.



## Qu'est-ce qui se passe ?

Comment cela pourrait-il être une menace pour les plantes ?

Figure 2 example of a menace discussion card.

Finally, we presented twelve threatened tree species for the Guinee Forestiere area and invited the participants to share if they had seen them in the area they patrol, if they know a common name. We also suggested that a group is created on WhatsApp to share information on these species i.e. if someone sees what they think is one of the priority species, but is not sure, they can post a picture of it on the group and Julien, Leonce or Charlotte could identify it. Or if it is known and is in flower or fruit, this could be posted so that we know what is happening in the different areas with these species and can plan seed collection trips. Creating this network was met with enthusiasm as many of the conservators want to be more involved in the work happening in their protected areas.

## Results

At the end of the session, we recirculated the questionnaire to see if people had a better understanding of the things discussed. The answers were then discussed as a group to make sure everyone understood.

It was clear that not everyone had a clear definition of what climate change is, so we talked it through and came to a consensus definition. Many more now understood what an ecosystem is and what the threats posed by slash and burn agriculture are. Nearly everyone understood the different problems that flooding causes for humans including the risk of disease. Most of the participants cited the need for awareness training to reduce charcoal production, but also the need for alternatives. Practically all 15 participants could give the scientific name of a threatened tree in Guinee Forestiere by the end of the session. A sample of the questionnaires which were anonymous are available in the annex.

Questionnaire:

1. Define Climate Change
2. Define « ecosystem » ?

3. What are the threats caused to habitats by slash and burn agriculture ?
4. What are the problems caused by flooding ?
5. How can we avoid charcoal production ?
6. Give the scientific name of a threatened tree in Guinée Forestière

## Conclusion

This was a useful pilot training session that enabled us to understand the gaps in knowledge of the conservators and modify our approach to make sure that everyone understood the terms and how to explain to a community member. It is clear that there were different levels of understanding within the participants. As with all training, repetition will be key to getting the messages across.

Further sessions could have a higher percentage of conservators from the areas where we are directly working with communities i.e. Diécké, Mt Bero and Pic de Fon. Though we recognise that all conservators need the training.

Future sessions could also be held in collaboration with the Forest and Fauna section, who are a separate entity, but are implicated in the protection of certain areas, also with the communities themselves. This might help to resolve some issues between all sectors.



Figure 3: Discussion groups around threats



Figure 4: discussion around ecosystem services