

THE EGI BULLETIN

A quarterly publication of the Environmental Governance Institute (EGI)

ISSUE 02/2013



Building partnerships

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From the Executive Director



Dear reader,

We are pleased to present you with yet another edition of the EGI Bulletin. In this edition, we present highlights from our work and equally highlight our efforts in building new partnerships.

Conservation just like nature protection has to be a collaborative effort. EGI alone would not even dare to undertake this kind of task. It is in this regard that we feel building partnerships both locally and internationally is the way forward to help us meet our objectives.

Over the past year, we have grown from strength to strength in terms of building partnerships. At national level we are also beginning to collaborate with civil society organizations and governmental agencies, such as the Ministry of Flora and Fauna (MINFOF) and the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED). The latter have been instrumental in implementing our Education for sustainable development strategy. EGI organised training workshops for school teachers in Buea on how to establish and run eco-clubs. Moreover, work with teachers in preparing a teachers' guide is well underway.

Supporting people to reduce their ecological footprints is central to our work with communities. With this in mind, activities geared at supporting village communities to adopt alternative livelihoods strategies too are expanding, and in this edition we bring you news from our beekeeping and agro-forestry projects.

Access to quality information about the environment is a serious hindrance to proper decision-making and to conducting research that informs policy-making. We are therefore happy to announce that the EGI resource centre has recently been enriched with access to over 30.000 journal articles.

In this edition, we also bring you news from our capacity building activities. Here, we let the beneficiaries tell their own story and we trust that you will find it insightful.

Throughout our experiences in 2013, we have worked to establish ourselves as a key player, but at the same time recognize that in order to create one's own niche and make an impact, one must build on what others are doing. As such, EGI is developing into a learning and knowledge-based organization.

As time goes by, we will continue to explore more avenues for partnership, which will be mutually beneficial.

In 2014, our priority will be to consolidate mutually beneficial relationships with local partners both in the Southwest region and in Cameroon as a whole.

We look forward to a year of working together and wish you and your families a prosperous 2014.

EGI acquires access to top international journals

A group of girls pause at the door, their eyes filled with hopeful inquiry. They approach the reception and ask if they can get some books to do their assignment.

The girls are in the final year of their Environmental Science degree course at the University of Buea. They have been given a short research assignment on the transformation of natural resources, and after weeks of searching for information on the subject, they have been directed to EGI.

A programs intern, accompanies them to the resource centre, discusses their assignment with them and helps them to identify the books they need. The intern and the resident scholar, Joshua spend some time helping the students to plan how to approach

their assignment, and then they leave them to read and make notes. At the end of their reading session, the students return the pile of books, pay the user fees and leave, armed with enough material to complete their assignment.

In recent months, the resource centre has been receiving many such visitors, who would like to carry out a specific assignment or just want to inform themselves further about the available resources. This follows a period of active public information by way of fliers and posters.

The EGI resource centre is located in the organization's office behind Paramount Hotel in Molyko, Buea, and offers access to hundreds of books.

Recently, the centre was boosted by acquiring online access to some of the world's renowned journals. This was enabled through successful application to be admitted to two programmes, one coordinated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the other by World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Both programs aim to boost access to information in low income countries across the world.

The HINARI Access to Research in Health Programme is coordinated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and brings together publishers and other health care content owners to provide biomedical and health care research and practical information guidelines to researchers and practitioners from low income areas. The programme facilitates access to up to 12,700 journals, 24,900 e-books and up to 70 other information resources.

Similarly, the Access to Research for Development and Innovation (ARDI) program is coordinated by the World Intellectual Property Organisation. Currently, 17 publishers provide access to nearly 10,000 journals, books and reference works through this program.

The EGI resource centre is open to the public and offers access to these information resources by providing the hardware and internet access to them.





Working together to build effective school environmental clubs

School environmental clubs play an important role in imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes required to foster sustainable development among young people. EGI has been taking lead to develop a guide for teachers, to enable them build effective clubs and facilitate their teaching of environmental issues.

The guide has been developed with active participation of teachers from partner schools in Buea, with technical input by officials from the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED).

During an inaugural workshop, which was held on the 14 October 2013 on the theme “collaboration to realize education for sustainable development”, teachers brainstormed about the meaning, objectives and importance of environmental clubs. They spoke of the specific strengths and weaknesses of their clubs and highlighted areas where they needed support.

In addition, individual and group meetings were held with coordinators of environmental clubs in secondary schools. Using the information gathered, the EGI team developed a draft guide, which was circulated to the teachers.

In a second meeting held on 28 November 2013, participants worked in groups to critique the content and the structure of this draft guide.

A future of collaboration

Among other things, teachers emphasized the importance of highlighting the environmental problems that club activities could resolve. They also stated the importance of linking club activities to actual situations, so that children could better understand how to apply their newly acquired skills.

Speaking on behalf of his group, Jean Pierre Eyaba from PCSS Buea requested that club activities be harmonized. “There should be a

uniform environmental pledge for all the schools and activities should be divided according to the school calendar.”

The meeting was boosted by the participation of the Guest of Honor, Mrs. Ekwaingen nee Mercy Boh M., the Regional Chief of Service for Information, Sensitization and Documentation, MINEPDED, accompanied by Mrs. Dzedezemaon Patience Dafela from the same Ministry.

The engagement of schools, civil society and government representatives at the workshop highlighted the importance of collaboration to address environmental problems. Participants discussed concrete examples of how collaboration worked. For example, Mrs. Sama Anteh Gladys from GHS Bolifamba explained how she helped students to use their knowledge to address household pollution, while Mrs. Ekwaingen highlighted specific environmental laws that seek to control industrial pollution and mete out penalties to non-compliant companies.

To indicate the readiness of her department to partner with schools, Mrs. Ekwaingen pledged government support to the schools in form of tree seedlings and other materials, which they could use to teach their club members about tree planting and use to beautify their school compounds.

So far, 11 schools are participating in the development of the guide. This activity has been partly supported by Environmental Education and Conservation Global (EECG), through

the John Judy Memorial Grant Fund. Teachers pointed out that not all of them were well versed with environmental matters. They requested capacity building support to enable them to teach these issues to their students in a better way. They also requested material support for some of their activities. In 2014,

EGI will concentrate its efforts on training the teachers based on their identified needs.

Former intern talks about her time at EGI



“ I didn't know there are some things that I could do, but EGI just brought them out

- miss Marywright Kemiah Bumah

I first learnt about EGI from a former intern and a friend who was already doing her internship. I had just completed my studies in Environmental Science at the University of Buea. After visiting the website to find out more about the organisation, I decided to apply.

My two-month internship helped me to understand and experience real working conditions, improve my skills and put into practice what I studied.

When I first got here, I was tasked with getting some statistics about Manyu division in the Southwest region. Later, I accompanied the Environmental Education Officer to schools to establish new partnerships, participated in brainstorming and background research for production of a guide to be used by environmental clubs and assisted people to use the resource centre.

Most of the work was done in teams, but towards the end I carried out a project of my own. During the last two weeks of my internship, I went out to mobilize more users for the resource centre. I went to schools and institutions of higher learning, and spoke with principals and vice-principals of secondary schools. At the university, I targeted specific departments, such as environmental science, law and human geography. I spoke to students and lecturers, distributed posters and fliers with information about opening times and resource centre fees, and the different types of books and journals.

I really liked going out to talk to people. I listened to their points of view and exchanged ideas. I enjoyed the way people got excited at the realisation that there was a resource centre with so many books. I believe the activity was successful, because afterwards, I noticed more people coming to ask about the resource centre.

It was not always smooth sailing. Sometimes, when there were many staff members in the office, we experienced a shortage of computers, which slowed down our work. It was clear that EGI needs more funds to provide more materials for their workers.

Nonetheless, I have improved my communication, computer and research skills. I have learnt how to be focused in a work environment, and how to select the media and type of information to communicate to the public. Lastly, I learnt that financing is an important factor for the progress of projects.

My experience at EGI is more than I expected. I didn't know that I would carry out projects on my own. I didn't know that there are some things that I could do, but my internship at EGI just brought them out.

I can only encourage people to come to EGI and grab knowledge, because everybody has something to offer here. The internship can teach them how to work and how to go out into the society, and they can learn how to bring out the best in themselves.

In a nutshell: Mamfe agro- forestry project

Following the training of community members on agro-forestry, each village selected a volunteer to participate in mobilizing fellow villagers to carry out the projects. In the last quarter of 2013, these volunteers went through a participatory learning approach with an agro-forestry trainer and the EGI Community Resource Person.

Apart from getting trained on the identification and establishment of appropriate tree nursery sites in their villages, the volunteers were taught to care for the seedlings before transplanting. A rapid assessment was also done in the schools to determine the level of environmental education being carried out. This is a first step in a plan to train students about tree planting and other environmental subjects.

At the same time, EGI started sourcing for seedlings such as bush mango, njangsa and bitter cola. The main nursery has been established in Nchang village, from which seedlings will be distributed to other village nurseries.



Once beaten twice shy: when the market chain fails beekeepers

In Aja-Ayukndip village in Eyumojock subdivision of Manyu, the Eble Nsi Society is getting ready to start a bee-keeping project. But one of their members, Mrs. Etta Lucy, is reluctant to participate. "Beekeeping is a nice activity, but it requires a lot of work. I don't think I can participate in such a project again."

Her hesitation is not unfounded. A few years back, they formed their group when a local organization introduced them to beekeeping. That time, Lucy was an eager participant. She excitedly joined in the activities, positive about the prospects of improving her income. Only after the harvest did she realize that the project conditions would not be met.

"What we were promised when the project was introduced never came to pass. The coordinator said that the first harvest of honey would be sold on our behalf and the money distributed back to members. Since she took that honey to go and sell, she has never shown up here."

After this treacherous act by someone that the group had placed their trust in, some members got discouraged and left the group. Lucy and the remaining 14 members soldiered on for three years, desperate to keep their dreams of a better income alive. But the challenges finally got the better of them when their hives were attacked by black ants. With no solution to the problem and no information on where to get help, the group bowed out of beekeeping. Now, they either farm or hunt to make money.

Lucy shared her story with EGI's Community and Gender Officer, Ruth Mobia. For the last quarter of 2013, EGI has been mobilizing community members and holding conservation education meetings with groups. Apart from sensitizing them about conserving wildlife resources, the organization offers training and beehives to reduce reliance on hunting and bush meat trade. The initiative is supported by Rhodes Scholars Southern Africa Forum (RSSAF) and New England Biolabs Foundation (NEBF).



Members of the *Poor Man Society* in Nkhogo village pose for a group meeting after their first sensitization meeting

Honey and other non-timber forest products provide a significant source of income and supplement to food supplies, especially for rural populations. Residents of villages around Takamanda National Park have long harvested honey from the forest, and its nutritional and medicinal value is well acknowledged.

In recent years, there have been efforts to commercialize honey production as an alternative income source.

Honey and other non-timber forest products provide a significant source of income

Nonetheless, constraints such as those experienced by the Eble Nsi Society are hindering the rate of adoption of honey production. Most small-scale beekeepers produce small quantities of honey and have poor access to available markets. Nonexistent or inadequate support services, coupled with unpredictable market conditions, discourages many from beekeeping.

Even with prevailing challenges, the residents of Aja-Ayukndip village have warmed up to the idea. Mr. Oben

Zaacs Ayuk hunts and sells bush meat, then invests the money he makes in his cocoa farm. He explains that cocoa production is seasonal in nature, and some cocoa farmers also use hunting as an alternative source of income as they await their harvest. "I never really liked hunting, but I just had to begin somewhere to make ends meet. I am willing to forego it and practice beekeeping instead," he says.

For Mr. Akum Etta Samuel, the project is a lifeline just at the right time. "When I was young I depended on hunting as my only means of livelihood. Being a retired hunter, life is so difficult. I can keep my beehive close to the house and manage it well to make some money for my needs."

Even Lucy has been convinced by fellow group members to forget past disappointments and give bee-keeping a second try. Clearly, a major concern that will have to be addressed is how to organize bee keepers and help them to access the honey market in a way that they can avoid exploitation by middlemen. Furthermore, success will be determined by the collaborative effort of different partners in supporting the bee keepers to access the technical skills to deal with challenges as they emerge.

Dealing with waste: whose responsibility?



The daily beeping of loud horns by HYSACAM garbage collection trucks has become a permanent feature of Buea's neighbourhoods. For the past three years, they have been in charge of managing waste in the town. Whereas the general perception is that the town is growing cleaner by the day, their work has brought with it a host of other challenges.

Sandra, a student of University of Buea's Department of Geology and Environmental Sciences feels that part of the problem is HYSACAM itself, especially their time consciousness. "I believe the uncleanness also comes about as a result of the fact that the trucks carry more than they can and some of the rubbish gets deposited back on the streets as the cars carry the dirt from the spots the cans are."

Nonetheless, she is quick to add that HYSACAM can't get all the blame. According to her, community heads should help in improving the level of cleanliness in their quarters. For instance she suggests that they should put community trash cans in their quarters. To make sure people use the trash cans, a fine should be levied on those who are found not to be using them. Sandra thinks that the residents should play a larger role in waste management.

Dr. Molindho Ekoka, Vice Dean for Research and Cooperation at the University of Buea's Department of Education, agrees. He states that HYSACAM workers may come late sometimes, but the people too are not doing their duty. On clean up days, they close their offices and reopen at the mandated 12 pm, without lifting a finger to do any cleaning. In fact, he believes that inhabitants of inaccessible quarters like Small Soppo, Dirty South, Bomaka and several others should carry their trash to the roadside to ease HYSACAM's work.

After all, HYSACAM will clean up

Easier said than done; he acknowledges that some people deposit their waste long after the trucks have passed through their quarters while others deliberately litter, with the assumption that HYSACAM exists to pick up after them.

Long working hours, inhabitants who do not adhere to the stated collection hours and do not take their domestic waste to designated collection points, and inaccessible roads – those are some of the challenges that one HYSACAM worker names, on condition of anonymity. "For the problem of inaccessibility, I would say that the community heads should talk to the municipal delegate so he will know what to do. For everything else, any good resident can help to resolve."

Public education can play a role too

But maybe for this to happen, some reorientation of residents' perceptions and responsibilities will have to take place, explains Mrs. Ekwaingen nee Mercy Boh M., the Regional Chief of Service for Information, Sensitisation and Documentation, at the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED). She states that Article 2 of the environmental law No.96/5/1996 on environmental management in Cameroon states that public and private institutions as well as NGOs shall within the context of their competence, sensitise all the populations on environmental problems. Therefore, this could be a good place to start.

"NGOs should meet groups and sensitise them on domestic waste management, composting, recycling and so on. They can be taught how the one-market-bag system works, and how to avoid using plastic bags which accounts for a large proportion of litter. "We should teach them that even if they have to use plastic bags, there are better ways of disposing."

EGI has already started doing its part, through supporting initiatives to teach school going children about waste management. The program aims to teach children about living in harmony with their environment and in consideration of others who share that environment. According to Dr. Ekoka, it is all about good citizenship in a country, good manners, and responsiveness. "I think Buea has greatly improved with respect to the level of cleanliness," he states.

Celebrating 50 years of reunification - an incentive for better house keeping

Dr. Ekoka is the patron of the university's ethics club. He explains that his and other environmental clubs around town have been carrying out regular clean up campaigns in preparation for the planned visit by the President of the Republic. This is an incentive to get things going, but in the longer term, a change in people's thinking will have to occur.

According to him, the government should encourage and support NGOs to educate people about their environment. "J.F. Kennedy, an American president who said, "Don't ask what the country has done for you, but what you have done for your country," he states, suggesting that this is the attitude we should foster among Buea residents.

Take advantage of the EGI Capacity building Programme

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The EGI Capacity Building Programme provides young professionals with the opportunity to catch a glimpse into the exciting world of environmental governance.

Qualified candidates can apply for internship or the resident scholars program

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