

There is a large body of national and international laws protecting African wildlife and habitats. But only 7% of the Congo Basin rainforest has any official protection status, mostly just existing on paper.

Great apes are listed on the Appendix I of the Washington Agreement (WA) and in the African Convention, and may not be hunted or trapped. Also many other species are protected by the WA.

Washington Agreement and CITES-Convention

The agreement regulates the international trade of endangered animal and plant species and of their remains. Most countries of the world have signed it. In its different appendices species are listed according to their endangered status and, correspondingly, their trade is strictly limited or illegal. Signatory countries review and enact the appendices every three years.

Limitations for implementation of laws:

- conflict with national economic interests
- a lack of political or strategic will
- no national co-ordination
- financial problems
- limited know-how for management
- lack of well qualified and equipped personnel
- laws get ignored
- non-existent communication technology
- corruption

Example: Cameroon

The responsibility for the protection of nature during the 80s in Cameroon fell to the Ministry for Tourism. This was led by a highly motivated leader who fought the bushmeat trade with control teams in the hunting areas, on the main roads and at train stations. During this time, there was very little bushmeat to be found in the markets.

More recently however, a Wildlife Protection team from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry undertook survey of roads. They stopped a minibus and found a shipment of small elephant tusks and duikers. A woman carried a bloody sack with four shot monkeys - she was the wife of a Member of Parliament...

Hunting is only allowed during a set season in the PR Congo. Non-traditional hunting techniques are forbidden, weapons must be licensed and a hunting tax has to be paid. All these proscriptions are ignored throughout the country!

"In principle" prohibitions do not usually bring about change! The local communities must be involved, e.g. in clarifying hunting rights. Environmental education has to enhance understanding for protection needs. Alternatives for income generating activities and nutrition must be sought. Nature conservation must be worthwhile, especially on the local level!

Many countries state that they would like to take measures against illegal hunting. But **corruption** and the involvement of officials in the profit of the bushmeat trade are widespread. Motivation of those in the highest political positions is needed to see that laws are enforced. Conflicts with other interest groups are anticipated.

A further key role is played by the "implementers", the control-teams and the rangers. Insufficiently trained, badly equipped and paid, they need a high personal motivation to do their often dangerous work. This is why wildlife protection organisations, such as *Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe* (Mountain Gorilla & Rainforest Direct Aid) equip and support such people.

The social and economic benefits for these people must exceed those from hunting!



Laws must be made known!

Poster from a Nigerian wildlife protection organisation.

In 1996, the EU together with ACP (African Caribbean Pacific Countries) agreed on a resolution against hunting of great apes and the destruction of tropical forests in Central and West Africa:

- Enforcement of national and international laws
- financial support through EU
- pressure by the European Commission and Parliament on European timber companies to adopt the Code of Conduct in order to minimise the negative impact of their operations in Africa
- EU-supported research on possibilities of low impact logging and alternative protein supply

There has yet to be any action on these points!!

The practical application of existing laws and agreements would have decisive results on the bushmeat problem!