

## Managing Challenges of Biosphere Reserves in Africa

Discussion moderated by Prof. Dr. Beate Jessel, President of BfN

- Results -

### *Climate change*

- Climate change is the biggest challenge for our generation and our children. Africa is most affected. Climate change already causes many deaths (according to IPCC reports).
- Drought (caused by climate change) is a severe issue. Animals went out of protected areas which caused many human-wildlife conflicts (example from Cameroon).
- Drought resulted into accidental fires. A tree nursery was established in Kenya for national park rehabilitation. This agroforestry approach should be distributed to other areas. We need to give incentives to communities.
- Climate change causes loss of coastal land. Sensitization is an important issue and we need more capacity building at higher levels.
- Structures in place are difficult. Africa could provide large carbon sinks. But mechanisms of provision are not efficient.
- Mitigation/sequestration is considered in BR management plans (example from Guinea).
- According to the national climate change strategy of DR Congo, BRs are pilot regions for CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration. Climate change is an opportunity in terms of REDD. 1 of 8 projects is implemented in a BR (example from DR Congo). It is important to acquire such projects for BRs.
- Carbon sequestration is also a problem, since there are lots of theoretical discussions but few practical examples.
- We need to understand market mechanisms on how people save carbon.

### *Biosphere reserve governance and management*

- Raising awareness on sustainable development in BRs.
- Policies are related to governance. Governance in Africa is a problem in many countries. Change of governments makes it difficult to achieve sustainability.
- UNESCO is to encourage national governments to develop sustainability policies.
- Generating a political will is crucial to achieve something on the political level.
- How to have local communities surrounding BRs benefit?
  - It's difficult to make people benefit from protected areas.
  - Participation of local communities.
  - Responsibility for the management of transition and buffer zones has been shifted from national government to communities to keep benefits on the local level (example from Ghana).
  - Provide incentives to communities.
- How to implement a management plan?
  - There is a lack of best practice examples for sustainable management of BRs.
- Capable research institutions are to get more involved systematically. It is important to carry out social research with the local people.
- Financing of BRs is insufficient which causes different management problems.
- There is a lack of finances for conservation projects. Developing countries are poor in economic terms but rich in terms of biodiversity. Access and equitable sharing of benefits from this biodiversity is big challenge for the management of BRs.
- BRs are a tool to alleviate poverty.
- We are not using the network of BRs appropriately. Our challenge is to develop collective action under the leadership of AfriMAB. With the assistance of our international partners we

need to monitor what is going on inside our reserves. We need to share our lessons learned. We will be very weak if we act isolated.

- The role of BRs in the management of natural resources will be enhanced, if the issues discussed are addressed.

### ***Implementation of the MAB Programme***

- BRs are a valuable tool for sustainable development. Governments should be convinced to foster BRs.
- AfriMAB tries to push all countries to establish a MAB National Committee through its regional coordinators.
- Some existing MAB National Committees are not functioning properly. People volunteer to do the work which leads to a lack of professionalism in some cases.
- Some members of MAB National Committees are not well informed on the BR concept. There is a need for specific training on that subject.
- National Commissions for UNESCO of countries with BRs should encourage other National Commissions for UNESCO of countries without BRs to establish new reserves. The MAB Programme is not a priority on their agenda, rated against other UNESCO issues. Opportunities of the MAB Programme should be communicated.
  - Promote BRs in Southern Africa through a letter to National Commissions for UNESCO. The regional AfriMAB coordinator for Southern Africa will contact stakeholders (NGOs, SADC).
- Facilitating communication is a main task of AfriMAB, although it is not working properly. It is difficult to bring the BR managers together. It happened only four times in the past. Last time in Nairobi in September 2010. AfriMAB should meet more often.

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