

Wildlife Conservation Capacity Development in Central Africa



A ranger on patrol in Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Credit: Virunga National Park

Capacity development is the ability of individuals, teams, organizations, and constituencies to develop and enhance their systems, resources, and knowledge, all reflected in their capability to perform functions, solve problems, and achieve objectives.

— Adapted from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Development of conservation capacity is critical to ensuring individuals and organizations are able to adapt to growing threats impacting wildlife and their habitats. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) employs a strategic threats-based approach to conserve species and habitats in Central Africa. As part of this approach, USFWS works with partners to identify the key competencies necessary to ensure individuals and organizations are achieving at the highest level.

By providing its expertise in the development of wildlife training programs and workforce planning, USFWS supports capacity development at all levels, including individuals, organizations, and legal frameworks.

Equally important to ensuring long-term support of capacity development is the ability to remain nimble and responsive to ensure training programs include the most up-to-date knowledge, the most current methods, and the latest technologies.

USFWS supports long-term mentoring and professional development for emerging conservation champions in Central Africa in order to respond to critical threats to the region's wildlife.

Desired Results for Conservation Capacity in Central Africa

- Identification of training, competencies, and new techniques needed to address threats to wildlife.
- Strengthened workforce capacity for wildlife and protected area management.
- Implementation of training plans for protected area staff to improve performance based on systematic assessments of training needs.
- Development of conservation champions in Africa.
- Transdisciplinary teams of emerging African conservationists to problem-solve key threats to wildlife and habitats.
- Improved institutional and faculty performance at regional wildlife colleges.
- Improved collaboration through networks of institutions.



MENTOR-POP (Progress on Pangolins) Fellows at the 17th Conference of Parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Credit: MENTOR-POP

The Five Levels of Capacity Development

1. The Individual Level

Affecting behaviors, knowledge, and skill sets all contribute to capacity development at the individual level. The training process is a critical component, and provides a framework for changes in attitudes, values, and participation.

Scholarships at Garoua Wildlife College:

USFWS supports **individual** capacity development for protected area staff through its collaboration with Garoua Wildlife College in Cameroon, and the development of training programs to increase capacity for wildlife and protected area management among faculty and students. USFWS support has provided 26 scholarships for individuals from three countries in the region.

2. The Team Level

At the team level, capacity development influences relationships between individuals, improves communication within and outside of groups of professionals, and increases access to mentoring and networking capabilities.

MENTOR Programs:

At the **team** level, the USFWS MENTOR Programs develop transdisciplinary teams of conservation practitioners to address complex threats. Through academic and field-based training and experiential learning, these programs have developed leaders in pangolin, manatee, great ape, and forest protection, as well as a team of professionals to respond to the threat of the commercial bushmeat trade to protected species.

3. The Organizational Level

Capacity development at the organizational level functions systematically to improve performance and adaptability, including on issues such as strategy, access to information, and overall resources.

The Government of Gabon:

USFWS works at the **organizational** level directly with the government of Gabon to develop the capacity of the country's national parks agency, *Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux* (ANPN). Gabon contains approximately half of Africa's remaining forest elephants, important populations of gorillas and chimpanzees, and one of the world's most productive marine ecosystems.

4. The Constituency Level

At the constituency level, capacity development moves beyond the individual and focuses on influencing community and societal change. Information sharing, education, the media, and awareness campaigns are important facets of these actions.

Local Communities:

Engagement with local communities is an important aspect of capacity development at the **constituency** level. Examples include the ongoing support of conservation efforts through community-based ecotourism and education in the Lake Region of Gabon.

5. The Systemic Level

Systemic capacity development affects the frameworks in which these previous levels operate, including policy, laws and regulations, and relationships, allowing for increased capability to respond and adapt to large-scale challenges.

Protected Area Management:

USFWS promotes **systemic** level capacity through its support of protected areas that are essential to the survival of wildlife in Central Africa. Through development of competence-based training needs assessments, implementation of training plans, review of organizational structure, identification of emerging leaders, and thorough evaluation methods, USFWS supports regional partners in establishing and effectively managing these critical protected areas.

USFWS supports improved workforce capacity in protected areas through systematic assessment of training needs and implementation of training plans.



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Military officer in Minkebe National Park, Gabon. Credit: William Kanapaux/USFWS



Local leaders meeting in Cameroon.
Credit: Dirk Byler/USFWS



MENTOR-FOREST Fellows conducting fieldwork. Credit: Lauriane Besse Strait/USFWS

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 USFWS International Affairs
November 2018