

**CENTRE FOR NURSERY DEVELOPMENT AND ERU PROPAGATION
(CENDEP)**



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(ERU-NTFP)**

Progress Technical Report
(June 1, 2006 to December 31, 2006)



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Project Identification

Implementing organization: CENTRE FOR NURSERY DEVELOPMENT AND ERU PROPAGATION

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1. Introduction:

This project centres on the production and marketing of *Gnetum spp* (Eru), a highly priced and harvested Non-Timber Forest Product in the forest regions of Cameroon. Because of free access and high demand, wild stocks are disappearing from the forests in Anglophone Cameroon, shifting the harvesters to the Francophone part of the country where the forest vegetable is still found in commercial quantities. In response to this the Limbe Botanic Garden researched and developed sustainable ways of cultivating eru for both income generation and biodiversity conservation purposes. As a result, individual farmers now cultivate eru in their farms with satisfactory results. What is produced or harvested locally is fed into the local restaurants and individual consumers. Despite the potential of eru in improving livelihoods in the rural areas market entry can be limited due to high capital, information or relationship barrier, inter-seasonal storage and transportation, which can result to increase price risks.

CENDEP, a community based organization in Limbe, Cameroon has the know-how and technical capacity to extend eru domestication techniques to farmers. However, despite growing demand from women's groups for training and assistance, a lack of funds has limited the ability of CENDEP to extend the eru domestication model to willing farmers. In June 2006 ICCO filled this gap by providing CENDEP a grant to train 150 farmers in 5 communities in the Buffer Zone of the Korup National Park (KNP). Unlike past training workshops this particular project was preceded by an analysis of the eru market in the area. The objectives of the project are to:

1. Sensitize at least 150 farmers in 5 villages through village meetings;
2. Create 5 farmer groups to champion the domestication, marketing and sustainable management of eru in the Buffer zone of the KNP;
3. Build the capacity of 150 farmers, 4 Agricultural Extension Workers (AEWs) and local NGOs on the production and marketing of eru through the organisation of 5 village training workshops and technical support visits;
4. Establish and manage 5 village nurseries;
5. Establish 5 pilot community/demonstration farms;
6. Assist trainees to establish their individual eru farms;
7. Assist trainees in the processing and marketing of eru harvested from the wild and/or farms.
8. Increase the post harvest life of eru through post harvest treatment;
9. Assist trainees in the sustainable management of wild stocks (enrichment planting, sustainable exploitation)

This report presents the results of the first six months of the ICCO grant. It highlights the achievements of phase I (objectives 1 to 4) in preparation for phase II (objectives 5 to 9.)

2. Methods applied:

In order to achieve the objectives mentioned above, a series of activities were carried out using a participatory approach. This involved:

2.1 Market analysis:

The project began with a market analysis to see how a thrust in production could be translated into financial and social gain. Findings of the market analysis are presented in a separate report earlier submitted for appraisal.

2.2 Preliminary contacts:

In order to mobilise local support for the project contacts were made with local stakeholders and potential development partners. Representatives of KfW (German Investment Bank) and RUMPI project, organisations operating in the project area were briefed at CENDEP headquarters, while all other stakeholders (village chiefs, government officials etc) were met in the field.

During the contact meetings agreements were made with hierarchy of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) for their extension staff to participate in the project. Through the contacts the local agriculture extension workers, local administration, village chiefs etc were informed of the project, the new agricultural crop (eru) was introduced and ground work set for mass sensitisation.

2.3 Sensitization Meetings:

The next step was farmer sensitisation. This was principally through village meetings. Posters prepared for this purpose were distributed during sensitization meetings and to various stakeholders. At the regional level a local FM radio station was used to sensitise the general public on the project. Over 239 people were reached through the village meetings. Working with its collaborators and learning from its past experiences in training, a baseline appraisal was conducted to:

- i. Determine the entry knowledge of the target population on eru and the relevant environmental issues as well as the potentials for learning to take place on the project and the challenges;
- ii. Develop strategies for overcoming learning challenges based on sound educational principles & practice and knowledge of the eru cultivation process.
- iii. Identify the indicators that should be monitored and addressed along the project cycle in order to ensure attainment of project objectives and achieve positive change towards sustainability.

Choice of the project beneficiaries was based on the outcome of the sensitization that took place. Through this interested farmers were identified and both organized and unorganized farmers benefited from the training.

2.4 Training workshops:/capacity Building

Skill transfer on the cultivation and sustainable management technique of the new agricultural crop was through the organisation of training workshops. These workshops were hands on and took place in the respective communities. During the workshop participants were trained on technical aspects of eru cultivation (Module 1) comprising but not limited to: importance of eru, threats, choice of nursery site, building the propagators, preparing the rooting medium, obtaining cuttings, sowing/setting of cuttings, routine watering and propagator cleaning. The rest of module 1 comprising preparation of polythene bags with fertile soil, transfer of rooted cuttings into the polythene bags, weaning & hardening processes, would follow during technical support visits. Through the training workshops community nurseries were put in place and daily management entrusted to members proposed by the community.

Interaction with the trainees and local stakeholders together with the guidance from ICCO provided useful information that permitted CENDEP to suggest a modification of its action plan. The modification is not meant to change project objectives but to better attain them.

Summary of results

A market analysis was carried out in the project area. The analysis constitutes a useful tool for informed decision making as far as production and marketing of eru is concerned in the area. Consultation meetings were held with key development organisations and government services operating in the project area to inform them of the project and to seek their collaboration. This support was obtained and in addition CENDEP was briefed on potential challenges. This paved the way for sensitisation meetings, five of which were held and 239 farmers sensitized. As a result of consultation and sensitization meetings there was general awareness of the project as well as support by all the stakeholders contacted. Notwithstanding, some villagers doubted if eru would grow in their community.

In total 4 communities were trained and their community nurseries established. 175 farmers participated in the training. Details are presented in table 1 below. One more community will be trained in February 2007. In addition to the farmers one local NGO and 6 MINADER staff were also involved in the training workshops. The objective was to build capacity of local development agents to continue the domestication work when CENDEP leaves. Technical support was provided on a monthly basis by CENDEP staff. MINADER in the course of executing their routine activities did monitoring of the trained groups. Outcomes of this exercise were discussed with CENDEP technical team on a monthly basis.

Table 1: Participation at training workshops

Village	Male	Female	Total	Agricultural Extension Workers	Number of organised groups participating
Dikome	14	23	37	2	3
Ikiliwindi	16	23	39	1	7
Ikondo Kondo	14	23	27	2	-
Meka Ngolo*	21	41	62	1	1
Totals	65	110	175	6	11

* Two neighbouring villages (Meka Ngolo and Bessingi) were trained in one location.

1000 sensitisation posters were prepared and 561 have already been used during the sensitisation process. A baseline appraisal of the target population was carried out. Four of the five seed multiplication farms previewed were established.

Out of the 5 groups that were supposed to be created only 2 groups have been formed so far. CENDEP is considering increasing the number so as to take on board the different needs of the various stakeholders: harvesters who rely on the wild stocks and the producers who are receiving the eru domestication training. A workshop on the presentation of the eru market analysis scheduled for February will also aim at coming up with an action plan for the organisation of harvesters.

Overall assessment of phase 1

Except for the training workshops all the activities programmed for phase 1 (Objectives 1-4) of the project were executed. There was however a delay in the execution of some activities. The major technical problem encountered was that of loss of viability of eru vines used in seed multiplication. On the average it required two days (to and fro) from the nearest training centre to an area in the forest where eru vines could be collected. CENDEP had to design a way to transport the vines from her seed multiplication farm in Limbe to the training sites. The establishment of community seed multiplication farms is therefore a necessity for the success/continuity of the project.

Trainees showed high enthusiasm on the cultivation of eru. This can be demonstrated by regular attendance at training workshops. Some farmers testified they had never before given so much of their time for a training workshop. There was however another group of farmers who saw the seed multiplication farms as an investment of CENDEP. They thought CENDEP would employ some one to take care of the nursery as it was the case in the past with Korup Project Nursery for example. One of our trainees, a local NGO,

excited about the project wanted to take credit for the work when they insisted sign boards mentioning them as collaborators be put in the community nurseries. This was rejected on the grounds that they came in as trainees and not trainers. However, this NGO facilitated contacts with the local authorities and according to them dispelled fears that CENDEP was Korup Project in disguise.

Table 2 presents progress made against targets as well as plans for the second phase.

Table 2: Progress Made & Plans For Phase II

S/N	Objectives	Activities	Targets	Progress/achievements	Plan for second phase
1	Sensitize at least 150 farmers in 5 villages through village meetings.	Hold consultation meetings with local administration & stakeholders	1. Meet all the relevant local stakeholders	1. Relevant development agents and local administration were informed of the project	Involve the stakeholders in market strategy development
		Carry out village sensitisation meetings with farmers	1. Produce and distribute 500 sensitization posters 2. Hold at least five village meetings 3. Sensitize at least 150 farmers in 5 villages.	1. 1000 posters were prepared and 561 distributed during sensitization meetings. 2. 5 village meetings were held 3. 239 farmers were sensitized	Continue sensitization on the need for a common strategy on the sustainable management of wild stock.
		Conduct baseline studies to develop monitoring indicators for the project	1. Recruit and manage a consultant 2. Prepare report of the baseline studies	1. Recruited and managed consultant 2. Baseline studies conducted but report pending	Incorporate the educational component in project monitoring and evaluation

S/N	Objectives	Activities	Targets	Progress/achievements	Plan for second phase
2	Build the capacity of 150 farmers, 4 Agricultural Extension Workers (AEWs) and local NGOs on the production and marketing of eru through the organisation of 5 village training workshops and technical support visits.	Carry out training on the domestication of eru	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organise five training workshops in five different villages 2. Train 150 farmers, 4AEWs and interested local NGOs on eru production and marketing. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 4 training workshops were organized 2. 175 farmers (110F & 65M) and 6AEWs were trained 3. One local NGO and representatives of 11 organised groups were also trained. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carry out training for "Together we Share CIG" a women's group in Mundemba Central by February 2007 2. Carry out exchange visits.
		Provide post training support through technical support visits	Trainees are supported technically on a monthly basis after training	3 support visits were conducted during the reporting period	<p>Ensure regular monthly technical support to all the trained groups.</p> <p>Complete module 1 of the training</p>
3	Establish and manage 5 village nurseries	Establish community nurseries	5 nurseries are established in five communities	4 nurseries were established	Construct an additional nursery by February 2007.
4	Establish 5 pilot community/demonstration farms	Establish community farms	5 demonstration farms are established in five communities	No demonstration farm was established.	Establish five demonstration farms from April 2007 when the rainy season begins

S/N	Objectives	Activities	Targets	Progress/achievements	Plan for second phase
5	Create 5 farmer groups to champion the domestication, marketing and sustainable management of eru in the Buffer zone of the KNP.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Group formation 2. Training on group dynamics 	5 producer groups are created	2 producer groups have been created. Four community nurseries have been created. They shall serve as entry point for the creation of farmer groups.	Create and provide institutional support to eru producer and harvester groups/unions
6	Assist trainees in the processing and marketing of eru harvested from the wild and/or farms.	Analyse the eru market in the support zone of the Korup National Park	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruit and manage a consultant 2. Prepare and submit report of the market study 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consultant recruited and worked with CENDEP in the market study 2. Market study report submitted 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Present market study to relevant stakeholders 2. Develop and implement action plan with stakeholders
7	Increase the post harvest life of eru through post harvest treatment	Set up eru processing unit	Prepare and submit proposal to local donors (embassies)	Proposal submitted to American Embassy and another to the UNDP in Cameroon	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Follow up grant proposal 2. Install eru drier in temporal structure 3. Start introduction of processed eru in local market 4. Search for international buyers/partners
		Organise eru marketing	Organise harvesters and producers into unions	Ground work started for community organisation	Collaborate with CED with experience in eru marketing.

S/N	Objectives	Activities	Targets	Progress/achievements	Plan for second phase
8	Assist trainees to establish their individual eru farms	Training on farm establishment and management	Farmers receive technical support on a monthly basis	Nil	Conduct scheduled training (Module 2) and follow up of established farms (
9	Assist trainees in the sustainable management of wild stocks (enrichment planting, sustainable exploitation)	Training on sustainable harvesting techniques	Farmers receive technical support on a monthly basis	Nil	Initiate training and technical support

Difficulties

Two principal problems were encountered, one at the farmer level and the other at the level of CENDEP.

At the level of the farmers a technical problem which is common with new trainees came up. Because of excitement too much water was put in the rooting propagators. This suffocated eru cuttings delaying rooting. In fact the cuttings had to be changed.

The other technical problem was the loss of viability of eru cuttings brought from the forest or from CENDEP seed multiplication farm at Limbe. This was the first experience of CENDEP in training a distant community which lacked propagation materials. To solve the problem a wooden insulated box was built for long distance transportation of planting material. Our field staff had problems transporting the box as people suspected it was a ballot box. Most of the time he had to open it to prove he was not carrying a filled ballot box!

The Korup Rainforest Ecotourism Organisation (KREO/KOGAN), a local tourism based organisation was one of the stakeholders we met. They consider the Korup Project Area their territory and a no go area. When CENDEP indicated she did not require approval from them to work in the area they decided to collaborate. Then suddenly they suggested that CENDEP put signboards in the eru seed multiplication farms she had established stating the farms were a joint venture of KREO/KOGAN and CENDEP. This was rejected by CENDEP. Rather than waste energy fighting this organisation CENDEP has been cementing links with the project beneficiaries and the collaborating stakeholders like MINADER, the Park Conservator, local administration (village chiefs, divisional officers etc). However, KREO/KOGAN was very instrumental in introducing CENDEP to the villagers. Recently they protested CENDEP did not involve them in a technical support visit depriving them of the opportunity to learn. This is a positive change in their relationship with CENDEP. We hope this will continue so they can acquire full knowledge on eru domestication before CENDEP leaves the scene.

Developments within CENDEP

The ICCO grant is the largest single grant CENDEP has received since its registration in 2000. An immediate consequence for the organisation was the need to improve on the transparency of her financial management. This led to the use of the services of professionals in the auditing of her accounts. CENDEP adopted annual auditing by external auditors and developed a draft financial manual for herself. Still in line with the grant was the need to develop terms of reference (ToR) for all team members who now had to operate full time. The ToRs were based on the technical know-how and current role of the members within the organisation.

Staff could not work full time in the premises of its leader which served as an office. Therefore the office was transferred from the delegate's house to the two rooms attached to the organisation's plant nursery. It is now fully operational and weekly management/planning meetings are a routine activity. The beginning was difficult and every one had the choice to comply with the current needs of the organisation or loose membership rights and benefits. Two new staff were brought in to fill the gaps existing within the organisation. One left for greener pastures. Today CENDEP is stronger in man power (quality wise) than it was before the start of the project. She is exploring other donors and expanding her area of coverage as a way to sustain the organisation.

Two internal workshops were held pertaining to institutional development namely:

- A workshop to develop volunteer/staff terms of reference (ToRs). The results of the workshop were presented for fine tuning by some one versed with the development of ToR (Consultant). The development of these ToRs now calls for a modification of the articles of association/legal status of the organisation. There are two options and CENDEP is yet to decide on the best option. In the meantime the law governing Common Initiative Groups (CIGs) has been changed though not yet made public. CENDEP is a CIG and is waiting for this law to see if it is in line with its current developments.

- A training workshop on book keeping. Our audit report for 2005 indicated the need to keep proper records for the proper verification of income and expenditure, the drawing up of a cash book where transactions can be recorded.

We identified some one with experience in book keeping working with a local credit house. He conducted a training session on book keeping for every one.

Based on staff ToRs some training needs were identified. In the absence of funding to meet the training needs CENDEP continues to use the services of local consultants to improve on her staff capacity.

Unlike other past donors of CENDEP, ICCO showed interest in the institutional development of CENDEP. The developments within CENDEP mentioned above were the results of fruitful dialogue between the two organizations. During the first phase of collaboration, CENDEP was visited once by a senior staff member of ICCO as well as an ICCO consultant. All these visitors helped to enlighten CENDEP more on ICCO policy. On ICCO's advice CENDEP recruited a consultant for its widely acclaimed eru market analysis. CENDEP also received on a regular basis the ICCO newsletter as well as documentation related to its project and institutional development.

CENDEP needs guidance in the development of its strategic and business plan and looks forward to getting ICCO technical assistance on this.

Recommendations:

In order to achieve success, there is need for flexibility. For instance the outcome of the market report presentation workshop of February, 16, 2007 shall shape the future of the project as far as the organization of harvesters and marketing of eru is concerned. No definite plan was earmarked for this at the start of the project. However CENDEP intends to take a participatory approach which shall incorporate local knowledge and skills.

In the six months that CENDEP and ICCO have maintained communication on organization development, CENDEP has made remarkable progress in her growth. It is our fervent wish that this communication be maintained for a couple more years to ensure that CENDEP can comply with donor needs in a competitive world.

Conclusion

With the groundwork so far done there is high hope that this project will succeed. However, CENDEP shall be proposing a follow up strategy which shall cater for the

next two models of the process involved in the production, processing and marketing of eru. More time is required to fully operationalize CENDEP's vision that eru leaves Cameroon partially processed (in packets) and local communities are doing the processing themselves. CENDEP is pleased to announce that the DED (German Development Service) has opted to implement CENDEP's vision in the Takamanda Forest (starting with module 1 which comprises training on seed multiplication techniques, nursery management, farm establishment and management and harvesting techniques. Module 2 shall consist of value adding and module 3, market development and promotion). This is the outcome of the sensitization process and shall take a couple of years.