

# Tafi Atome Monkey Sanctuary

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## Introduction

This project marks another milestone in the collaboration between the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and Friends of the Earth-Ghana (FoE-Ghana).

The people of Tafi Atome, after migrating from Assin in the Western/Central Region to the Tafi Atome area in the Volta Region, have been protecting the Mona monkey (*Cercopithecus mona*) for the past 200 years by considering the animals and their habitat as sacred. Following the introduction of Christianity into the Tafi area, however, there were signs of interference with the traditional beliefs. This had adverse impacts on the habitat of the Mona monkey.

In 1993, the Nature Conservation Research Centre (NCRC), an environmental NGO in Accra, collaborated with Peace Corps Ghana, SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation) and the Ghana Tourist Board and used funds provided by USAID to encourage the people of Tafi Atome to protect the habitat and the Mona monkeys as tourist attractions for the development of ecotourism. A community-based ecotourism site was consequently identified at Tafi Atome. It is believed that the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission and the Ghana Wildlife Society amongst others, have also encouraged the people of Tafi to embark on community-based ecotourism development at Tafi Atome.

The traditional authorities at Tafi Atome, Tafi Mador, Abuife and Vakpo-Fu have been co-operating with FoE-Ghana in an effort to conserve the biodiversity of the Tafi Atome Monkey Sanctuary and to develop ecotourism among other things. FoE-Ghana's local groups, the regional co-ordinator for the Volta Region, the traditional authorities and the Director of FoE-Ghana succeeded in obtaining funds from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to implement a Small Grant Project (GHA/98/G52) during the period May 2004 to May 2006. The title of the project was 'Biodiversity Conservation and Community Ecotourism Development of the Tafi Atome Wildlife Sanctuary.

## Project implementation

A fourteen-member Project Management Committee comprising representatives of the traditional authorities and the four major communities (Tafi Atome, Tafi Mador, Abuife and Vakpo-Fu) has played a key role in the project's implementation. The Technical Coordinator at the National Secretariat of FoE-Ghana in Accra together with FoE-Ghana's Volta Region Coordinator provided the link between FoE-Ghana and the Project Management Committee.



A Mona monkey at the Tafi Atome Monkey Sanctuary  
Picture: FoE-Ghana

## Activities

**1. Boundary Demarcation: Pillaring and Traversing**  
Thirty-six concrete pillars, each with a serial number, have been erected on the perimeter (boundary line) of the sanctuary. The Geographical Positioning System (GPS) based on the satellite technology was used to determine the bearings of the 36 segments of the boundary line which is 1.9km long. A land plan of the sanctuary has been produced, signed and sealed as authentic by Department of Survey in the Ministry of Lands, Forestry and Mines.

The sanctuary's area, including the Tafi Atome cultural village, is about 48.63ha (120acres). The land plan of the sanctuary is link-traversed to a

survey pillar in Kpando which now serves as a beacon for the accurate integration of the sanctuary into the national grid, i.e. the map of the Hohoe District in the Volta Region and the Tourist Map of Ghana.

## 2. Buffer Zones

The patch of forest along the northern bank of the River Aavor is now serving as a buffer zone. Other sites developed as buffer zones include parcels of farmland adjacent to the eastern and southern sections of the boundary line.

Agroforestry practices and organic farming are being promoted at the deforested sites on the farmlands in an effort to restore secondary forests. The anticipated overall purpose of the forest restoration process in the buffer zones is to enhance biodiversity protection in the demarcated core area.

## 3. Firebreak and Wildfire Prevention

The firebreak around the sanctuary has been effectively maintained by the community volunteers during the last dry seasons and as usual there has been no incidence of bushfires in the monkey sanctuary during the period of project implementation.

## 4. Capacity Building Workshop: Sustainable Alternative Livelihoods

Training workshops in organic farming and sustainable livelihoods such as grasscutter rearing/farming and beekeeping have been organised for more than 60 people (youth, men and women) selected from the four major communities. They have been trained as trainers for their respective communities.

The trainees visited a grasscutter rearing centre in Hohoe for the purpose of benefiting from the experience and knowledge of Ms. Agnes Ahribi, a grasscutter farmer and a District Best Farmer Award winner. She has agreed to sell some live grasscutters as parent stocks to the beneficiary communities and to give them practical assistance when needed.



Boundary line converted into a firebreak  
Picture: FoE-Ghana

On the initiative of the beneficiary communities, various groups have been formed for the purpose of undertaking sustainable alternative livelihoods of their choice. The Tafi Atome community has formed groups for grasscutter and livestock (goats) rearing, beekeeping and organic farming. Abuife and Vakpo-Fu communities have formed groups for beekeeping and grasscutter rearing.

The groups that were interested in grasscutter rearing agreed to enter into contractual agreements with the project prior to the supply of live grasscutters to them. This arrangement was meant to ensure that the groups would shoulder their responsibility in looking after the animals. The group members appreciated the fact that grasscutter rearing was a capital intensive and time consuming venture. Successful rearing of grasscutters and the consequent availability of bushmeat are expected to reduce the incidence of bushfires that are often started by people who burn extensive vegetation in the dry season in the process of hunting grasscutters in the Volta Region.

## 5. Environmental Awareness Creation

The activities sought to create awareness of the importance of the sanctuary for the socio-economic wellbeing of the people and to develop community-based environmental monitoring systems and community resource management plans. Following the lectures and discussions in the schools at Tafi Atome, Tafi Mador and Abuife, the school authorities and students demonstrated appreciation and keen interest in the project. In addition to taking part in the discussions on such topics as environmental protection, organic farming and biodiversity conservation, the staff and students participated actively in the establishment of tree nurseries on the school lands.



The tree nursery at Tafi Atome  
Picture: FoE-Ghana

#### 6. Tree Nursery Sites

Four tree nurseries with about 17,000 seedlings were established. The sites were Tafi Atome Roman Catholic School (5,000 seedlings), Tafi Atome Junior School (5,000 seedlings), Tafi Mador Junior Secondary School (2,000 seedlings) and Tafi Mador Community (5,000 seedling).

#### 7. Enforcement of Traditional Bye-laws

Draft traditional bye-laws were jointly prepared for final discussion and adoption by all stakeholders including the Hohoe District Assembly. These draft bye-laws seek to forbid the following among other negative activities and practices within the core area of the monkey sanctuary:

- Farming
- Collection of fuelwood
- Collection of medicinal plants, roots, bark, leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds;
- Hunting
- Livestock grazing/browsing.

The bye-laws also protect the Aavor River against pollution. The following national laws and regulations are applicable to the Tafi traditional area:

- a) Forest laws and regulations of Ghana, especially the sections on chainsaws;
- b) The Wildlife laws and regulations, especially the sections on the completely protected species as well as those on hunting in general;
- c) The Control and Prevention of Bushfires Law, 1990 (PNDCL229).

Two odum trees (*Milicia excelsa*), one *Kyenkyen* tree (*Antiaris toxicaria*) and one *Nyamedua* tree (*Alstonia boonei*) were unfortunately felled by residents of Tafi Atome. An intensive investigation conducted by officials of FoE-Ghana revealed the following:

- a) the four trees were illegally felled without the knowledge of the District Forestry Office and the District Assembly;
- b) the trees were unlawfully processed on site with chainsaws;
- c) in each case the harvested timber was used for constructional works (both public and private) at Tafi Atome.

Consequently the awareness creation programme placed due emphasis on the need to conserve the existing timber resources and to curtail the misuse and illegal use of chainsaws in the project area.

It was noted that ownership of trees growing on farmlands in the buffer zones needed further consideration by the Forestry Commission. Arrangements were made for replanting timber species at the affected sites and in the buffer zones. The Tafi Atome community was mobilised to assist the traditional authorities in resource management, and accepted the responsibility of participating in the replanting exercise and nurturing the planted seedlings.

#### Achievements

##### a) Protection of the habitat

There were no new instances of encroachment by farmers on the habitat within the wildlife sanctuary. The efforts made by the communities towards bushfire prevention were successful and highly commendable.

##### b) Protection of flora and fauna

With the sole exception of the illegal felling and processing of four timber trees, the biodiversity conservation efforts were deemed successful.

##### c) Commitment

In addition to demonstrating a commitment to the project implementation, the traditional authorities, schools and local communities appreciated the relevance of positive indigenous knowledge and traditional practices to the development of ecotourism based on the biological resources of Tafi Atome Wildlife Sanctuary.



#### *d) Increased understanding of issues*

An understanding of the issues relevant to the project is increasing at both the local community and the district levels. The project participants recognise the important role of Tafi Atome Wildlife Sanctuary in their socio-economic development. They acknowledge the fact that their contributions are a prerequisite for enjoying the expected benefits from ecotourism and sustainable alternative livelihoods.

#### **Immediate benefits**

- *Knowledge and skills*

The project participants have benefited from the technical knowledge and experiences shared by FoE-Ghana, Ecumenical Association for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (ECASARD) and SNV-Ghana during workshops, meetings and informal discussions. They have also been equipped with the requisite skills in boundary demarcation and pillaring, and site selection for the establishment of buffer zones.

- *Traditional laws*

The traditional law enforcement procedure at Tafi Atome has been streamlined. Penalties and disincentives for defaulters and culprits have been agreed upon and incorporated into the draft bye-laws.

- *Increased revenue*

Ecotourism is bringing in some revenue for the communities through entrance fees, accommodation, craft sales and related ecotourism activities. The number of visitors to the Sanctuary continues to increase as a result of the improved protection of the flora and fauna and better chances of viewing the Mona monkeys in the Sanctuary. The traditional authorities, landowners and communities benefit from the revenue generated which is increasing gradually.

#### **Long-term benefits**

- The development of ecotourism based on the biological resources of the Sanctuary and positive traditional practices will eventually contribute to poverty reduction and sustainability of the initiated biodiversity conservation measures.
- The services of the anti-bushfire squads in the communities will go a long way to protect the Wildlife Sanctuary, the adjacent farmlands and the buildings in the villages against the rampant wildfires that often sweep across the savannah zone in Ghana.
- The people in the Tafi area will benefit from alternative and sustainable livelihoods such as beekeeping, livestock and grasscutter rearing, and organic farming practices.
- The pupils, students and the youth in general will be better prepared to shoulder the responsibility of conserving biodiversity effectively as they grow and become adults.

#### **New developments and unexpected problems**

The project has made no provision for compensation payments to farmers for the timber species currently growing on their farmlands in the buffer zones that the project would want the farmers to conserve. When some residents became aware of this fact, they illegally felled timber trees that were either growing on the boundary of the sanctuary or very close to it. This issue has to be discussed thoroughly with the affected farmers, traditional authorities, Fire Services Division officials, and the Hohoe District Assembly. A forum is proposed to include all stakeholders for discussions on new developments and unexpected problems.



A Mona monkey at the Tafi Atome  
Monkey Sanctuary  
Picture: FoE-Ghana

#### **Remarks and lessons learned**

Although incentives, particularly financial ones, generally help motivate people to carry out essential project activities, the traditional authorities and the participating communities should be made to appreciate the fact that they own the project. They are also expected to sustain the measures initiated for the conservation of biodiversity as they are the primary beneficiaries of the project's outputs.

At the commencement of the implementation of such a project, a differentiation should be made between the rights of individuals and those of the community as a whole. An understanding based on these different rights is

essential for maintaining peace and harmony within the communities both during and after project implementation.

### **Conclusions**

An area of approximately 48.63ha, with the Tafi Atome village covering the innermost one-third of that area, forms the Tafi Atome Monkey Sanctuary and cultural village. The entire boundary of this core area has been surveyed using GPS technology and concrete pillars erected along the whole length of the sanctuary perimeter. The plan of the land for the sanctuary has been signed and sealed by the Survey Department of Ghana. This has paved the way for the legal proclamation of the wildlife sanctuary by the Hohoe District Assembly, the consolidation of the community-based biodiversity conservation systems and accelerated development of ecotourism.

The following, however, should be given further attention:

- a) Promotion of alternative livelihood activities, especially grasscutter rearing. In addition to its contributions to the achievements of food security and enhancement of human health, the activities can lead to drastic reductions in the incidence of bushfires started by grasscutter hunters.
- b) Creation and expansion of buffer zones around the monkey sanctuary. Farming practices in the buffer zones, especially through the adoption of organic farming, will accelerate the rate of reforestation of the parcels of land around the sanctuary. Establishment of woodlots will also go along way to help solve the fuelwood problem in the Tafi traditional area.
- c) Development of a sustainable management plan. The continued support of FoE-Ghana for the development and implementation of community-based management plans and the wildlife sanctuary cannot be overemphasised.