



Environmental Impact Assessment - example of Wildlife Tourism in Dzanga-Sangha Protected Areas (DSPA), Central African Republic.

Environmental Impact

An environmental impact assessment is a kind of survey or enquiry, an investigation that looks at all the possible different ways that a project will effect the environment. EIAs are carried out for many projects, construction of roads or structures like buildings, bridges, factories, a new reservoir, or port.

EIAs are particularly important for any developments that may be planned in national parks and conservation areas because these are places where mankind seeks to minimise or curb anthropogenic changes.

When suggestions were made to develop the facilities for Gorilla tourism in the Dzanga-Sangha Protected Area in CAR a preliminary EIA was carried out. The proposals were to create a tourist base close to the place where tourists depart the complex for their forest activities, and also to expand the camp in the forest so that more research could be carried out there.

The results of the study indicated that despite the benefits to visitors, a tourist camp may only serve to increase the various impacts the camps have on the forest. Impacts relating to transportation and road use, vehicle use, energy requirements, camp maintenance, disturbance to wildlife were considered. The overall impact of the camps was assessed as generally low but negative. The impacts of potential land clearance, waste management, and road use were highlighted.

A matrix was used to record the frequency of different events and the severity of their impact. These were ranked in order to quantify the different impacts of the programme's activities. High impacts were noted for the following :

- **Transportation:** presence of road to maintain functioning research camp and tourist launch base and increasing edge effects or forest fragmentation;
- **Cooking:** packaging waste causes an increase in debris in the area of the forest camp ;
- **Toilet:** presence of toilet facilities in forest camp leads to land contamination;
- **Sweeping:** removal of leaf-litter and clearing of vegetation in forest camp prevents land recovery;
- **Protection:** elephant barrier fence (with cans for noise generation) requires land allocated to camp;
- **Wildlife observation:** tracking using temporary trails leads to physical damage of the forest including broken saplings;
- **Expansion beyond camp boundary:** camp maintenance leads to erosion and loss of habitat;
- **Building and maintenance:** increased capacity and subsequent effect on resource requirements leads to increased emitted substances and a greater negative impact across all activities;
- **Disposal:** packaging waste leads to increased debris of man-made materials in the forest environment.

Activity

Imagine that a new modern school was going to be built in your village. Two sites have been proposed, one would use land that is currently community forest, the other site is currently farmland between the existing school and the river. What factors would you look at if you were carrying out the EIA? How would you measure the variables you have identified?