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**DATA COLLECTION OF IMPACTS OF THE
NACHTIGAL HYDROELECTRIC DAM
CONSTRUCTION PROJECT ON LOCAL
COMMUNITIES AND SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL CORPS**



REPORT

August 2020

CONTEXT

The Nachtigal hydroelectric dam on the Sanaga River in Cameroon is being built by the Nachtigal Hydro Power Company (NHPC), a company incorporated under Cameroonian law. The construction of this hydroelectric dam has the financial support of several partners such as Electricité de France (EDF), AFRICA50, STOA, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Dutch development finance company (FMO). The project aims to develop, build and operate a 420 MW hydroelectric power plant in Cameroon. According to the promoters of the project, the dam will be connected to the Southern interconnected grid and, when operational in 2023, will provide low-cost electricity. The electricity will be sold to Cameroon's national electricity company (ENEO) under a 35-year power purchase agreement.

It should be noted that similar projects, such as the f Lom Pangar, Memvélé, Mekin dams, the Kribi deep-sea port, the Douala-Yaounde highway, have been implemented with devastating consequences on communities and the environment that have not been sufficiently discussed and addressed. IFI Synergies Group Cameroon therefore intends to draw on the experiences of the Lom Pangar, Mekin and Memvele dams to inform actions aimed at ensuring the implementation of the project without causing harm to the communities and through the respect of strict environmental and social guarantees of the various financial institutions' partners in the construction of the Nachtigal hydroelectric dam.

In order to promote the respect of social and environmental standards by the financial partners of the Nachtigal hydroelectric dam construction, IFI Synergies received funding from the Global Grantgreen Fund (GGF) to document the social, economic and environmental impacts of the construction of the Nachtigal hydroelectric dam on the communities, and to accompany them in the process of demanding and making sure their rights are respected by the various financial partners. IFI-Synergies Cameroon and its partners are therefore very concerned about the complaints of displaced households, fishermen, sandblasters and other environmental problems that the project may generate. On August 2020 IFI Synergy team visited communities and some socio-professional corps in and around the Nachtigal hydroelectric dam area to get their views of the project.

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of this mission, the approach adopted consisted in informing the traditional chiefs of the IFI Synergy Cameroon team's descent or the mission team in the locality by telephone calls so that they could mobilize their populations. Upon arrival in the area, the mission team went to each village to make an appointment with the village chief, who was responsible for conveying the information and bringing his community together for this purpose. During the mission, focus groups with women, youth and men were organized. The working approach was participatory with an emphasis on freedom of expression.



Photo: Participatory approach integrating gender (women, youths, handicaps (blind), men...)

II. DISCUSSIONS WITH COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL PROFESSIONAL CORPS

Within the framework of this mission, we discussed with the populations of the villages located in the area of the hydroelectric power station (Ekombitié, Ndokoa (Mbadjock council), Binadjengue (Ntui council) and Ndji (Batchenga council) and the villages located on the passage of the transmission line (Mebassa, Olembe, Nachtigal, Obalon center in the commune of Batchenga). Also, we spoke with the socio-professional bodies (fishermen, sanders, restaurateurs and farmers). Our discussions focused on the community consultation process, the activities carried out by the communities before the installation of the dam, the compensations received, the difficulties currently faced by the communities, and the complaints of the communities and the socio-professional bodies.



Photo: Interview with the Mebassa community on the impacts of the NHPC project.

II.1. Community Consultation in the Nachtigal Dam Construction Project

The Nachtigal Hydro Power Company (NHPC) which is the Cameroonian company in charge of the construction of the dam has initiated since 2015, consultations with communities and socio-professional bodies that are expected to be impacted by the construction of the dam. The consultation meetings were held in the different chiefdoms and were chaired by NHPC employees. According to the communities and the socio-professional bodies, during the consultation meetings, it was a question of presenting the project and the NHPC company, presenting the financial partners for the construction of the dam, presenting the impacts that the communities will suffer with the installation of the dam (no more water, noise, tree felling, etc.) and presenting the compensations that will be paid to them by the project. The observation made on the ground is that the communities are unaware of the compensation and complaint management mechanism of the NHPC, but rather know what they will lose, the problems they will face, the compensations they will receive and some financial partners of the Nachtigal Dam construction project such as the World Bank.



Community Discussions

II.2. Activities carried out by communities prior to the installation of the dam

On the current site of the Nachtigal Dam construction project, communities and socio-professional corps carried out many activities, which allowed the local economy to boom. These activities included:

- Fishing;
- Sand excavation;
- Restoration;

- Collection of "Djansang" and many other NTFPs (marantaceae leaves, bark and leaves for the pharmacopoeia);
- Agriculture;
- Traditional rites in the sacred site.

These were the main activities carried out in the localities by all social strata, which involved a chain for example the sand activity consisted of quarry owners, divers, restaurateurs who sold in the sand quarries, unloaders of pirogues, loaders and truck drivers. Also, the activities of "djansang" collection and market gardening were carried out by women. All of these activities enabled households to meet their needs in terms of education, health, and food for their families. Also, the communities collected plants and used the river water for pharmacopoeia, in addition, in the sacred site, the community of Binadjengue, performed its rituals.

In terms of income, for the sandblasters, per sand truck, the quarry owner had 10000 FCFA/canoe, the diver had 3500 FCFA/canoe, the unloader per canoe had 1000 FCFA/canoe and the loading team (04 to 06 people) had 6000 FCFA per truck. Concerning the fishermen, depending on the fishing seasons, the average daily income was 16700 FCFA, the average monthly income was 500,000 FCFA and the average quarterly income was 1,500,000 FCFA. These different activities are no longer carried out in the various localities crossed by the Nachtigal hydroelectric dam. This is only a memory because the communities are forbidden to enter the water within the perimeter of the dam.

II.3. NHPC's Promises to Communities and Socio-Professional Corps

For the construction of the Upper Nachtigal Hydroelectric Dam, NHPC has formulated numerous measures to reduce the impacts of dam construction on the communities. On the ground, the communities' expectations regarding the restoration of their livelihoods and resettlement are exactly those contained in the project's ESMP. The tables below illustrate the community compensation measures proposed by NHPC.

Table 1: Livelihoods Restoration plan for Sand Workers

<i>Plan</i>	<i>Impacts</i>	<i>Measures</i>
<i>Livelihood Restoration Plan (LRP)</i>	<i>Economic displacement:</i> <i>- 908 people affected identified, including 214 impacted from 2017 (according to the 2016 census)</i>	<i>Transitional allowances based on lost earnings (estimated over 6 months of earnings for sand workers, and 3 months for canoe builders and quarry site restorers)</i>
		<i>Return allowances for migrant workers</i>
		<i>Financial compensation for the loss of investments</i>
		<i>Conversion assistance programs with different agricultural and non-agricultural options (training, support for entrepreneurial initiatives ...).</i>
		<i>Establishment of a fund for the affected councils, fed by a royalty on the industrial exploitation of the sand of the future reservoir.</i>

Table 2: Resettlement and compensation of DUP zone PaPs

<i>Plan</i>	<i>Impacts</i>	<i>Measures</i>
PAR	Physical displacement: - 5 households	Physical relocation of all members of the households concerned
		Compensation of affected persons (property and development)
		Access to replacement lands
	Economic displacement: - 856 people concerned by the farm lands.	Technical assistance, inputs, equipment
		Restoration of the standard of living of those affected (agriculture, fishing, trade)
	Economic displacement: - 117 fishermen - 83 fish wholesalers	Fisheries Action Plan
Specific training for fishing, assistance in the acquisition of equipment		
Infrastructure support for the implementation of the fishing plan		

Table 3: Compensation for social impacts (excluding PAR/PRME)

<i>Plan</i>	<i>Impacts</i>	<i>Measures</i>
PGES	Impacts on cultural and archaeological resources	Plan for the protection of cultural and archaeological heritage
	Impact on the local socio economy	Stakeholder communication plan and complaints management
		Action plan to promote local recruitment and subcontracting
		Vocational Training Support Plan
		Energy access map
		- Control plan and management of social influxes in order to minimize and channel these influxes while controlling their negative consequences:
- considering the migratory flows in the policies of the communes		
Construction site: worker health risk	- Worker health and safety plan	

II.4. Compensation received from NHPC

For the implementation of the upstream Nachtigal hydroelectric dam, NHPC has identified all those who will be physically or economically impacted. Thus, the compensation paid to communities and socio-professional bodies by NHPC to mitigate the impacts of the project are:

II.4.1. Binadjengue Sacred Site

Located in the water retention area of the upstream Nachtigal hydroelectric dam, according to the people of Binadjengue, the compensation that the NHPC made

available to them was the sum of 3,000,000 FCFA for the ceremony of moving the site to another location. The latter believe that this represents absolutely nothing at all as they lost the water that served as a medicine, the pharmacopoeia, and the fish that were useful for their traditional rites.



Photo: Meeting with the chief and some notables of the Binadjengue village where the sacred site is located.

11.4.2. Farmers

After the census of their crops (cassava, plantain, papaya, etc.) by the NHPC, they received financial compensation according to the Nachtigal project grid and agricultural land of their choice was purchased by the NHPC and made available to them in the different localities. Also, the NHPC made available to them seedlings (plantain banana) to continue their activity. In the field, farmers impacted by the construction of the Nachtigal dam are satisfied with what they received from NHPC as compensation.

11.4.3. Fishermen

The fishermen impacted by the Nachtigal Upstream hydroelectric dam construction project all own fishing licenses issued by MINEPIA and were identified by the NHPC. In view of the promises that the NHPC made to them, only those fishermen who had opted to continue fishing have so far received compensation of 150,000 FCFA from the NHPC in order to purchase fishing equipment. For them, this is very insignificant compared to what they earned in the past when fishing was lucrative in the area. Whereas those who had opted to convert to other sectors of activity until now have received nothing in compensation from the NHPC. This situation has caused distress to most of the local fishermen, as NHPC has been asking them to wait for compensation for more than five years.



Photo: Discussion with Batchenga fishermen

II.4.4. Sandblasters

To the sandblasters impacted by the construction of the upstream Nachtigal hydroelectric dam, of all the promises made to them by NHPC, only a few sandblasters located in what NHPC has called the red zone, have each received financial compensation as follows:

- *Sand quarry owners: 6 600 000 FCFA;*
- *Heads of sand quarry: 3 800 000 FCFA;*
- *Divers: 1 800 000 FCFA;*
- *Dugout unloader and truck loaders each received 1 200 000 FCFA;*
- *Restaurers on the sand quarries: 750 000 FCFA.*

While the majority of the sanders are still waiting for their compensation, those who received the financial compensation made available to them by the NHPC believe that it is low and does not represent much compared to what they earned when the sand activity was flourishing in the locality because per sand trip, the quarry owner had 10000 FCFA, the diver had 3500 FCFA, the dugout unloader had 1000 FCFA and the team of truck loaders (04 to 06 people) had 6000 FCFA.



Photo: Meeting with the community and the sandblasters of Ndji

II.5. Difficulties of the communities and socio-professional corps in the Nachtigal dam construction area

Since the start of construction of the Nachtigal Dam in 2018, the communities or socio-professional bodies located on the right-of-way of this project have been facing many difficulties. According to them;

- *Unemployment;*
- *Prohibition to access their sand quarry sites;*
- *Prohibition for former restaurateurs in the sand quarries to sell food to NHPC employees;*
- *Ban on access to water;*
- *Scarcity of freshwater fish;*
- *Low compensation;*
- *The scarcity of rainfall in the area, according to them, NHPC is blocking the rains;*
- *Lack of compensation to the beneficiaries of deceased beneficiaries;*
- *Loss of the pharmacopoeia to treat ourselves or perform traditional rites; Loss of the pharmacopoeia to treat oneself or perform traditional rites.*

All these difficulties are due to the construction of the Nachtigal dam, it jeopardizes their livelihood, their education, their health, their food and has even led to broken homes (departure of the wives).



Photo: Destruction of farmlands and sacred sites (Dam area)



Photo: Canoes used for transporting sand abandoned by sandblasters

II.6. Communities' Claims against NHPC

In the localities affected by the Nachtigal hydroelectric dam construction project that the mission team visited, the communities as well as the socio-professional corps that the mission team met have numerous claims that they make against the NHPC to ensure that their rights are respected in the implementation of the project. These claims include:

- Meet NHPC's original commitment to allow former sand quarry restorers to sell food at the dam construction sites;

- Recruit local youth as laborers, drivers or technicians in the dam construction project;
- Clearly outline the participatory process of reconversion of fishermen, sandblasters and fishmongers within the framework of the dam project;
- Provide electricity to villages when the dam becomes operational;
- Respect all the promises and compensatory measures contained in the plan to restore the livelihoods of communities and socio-professional bodies;
- Restart discussions with communities and socio-professional bodies in a participatory manner;
- Review through a participatory approach the compensation amounts imposed by the NHPC to ensure that the impacted population gets fair remedy.

II.7. Actions already taken by the communities to request the reinstatement of their rights from the NHPC

The communities as well as the socio-professional corps affected by the project feel that the compensation they received from NHPC is in contradiction with the promises NHPC made to them and the compensatory measures contained in the livelihood restoration plan. In order to claim their rights, the local socio-professional bodies have unsuccessfully petitioned NHPC to claim their compensation.

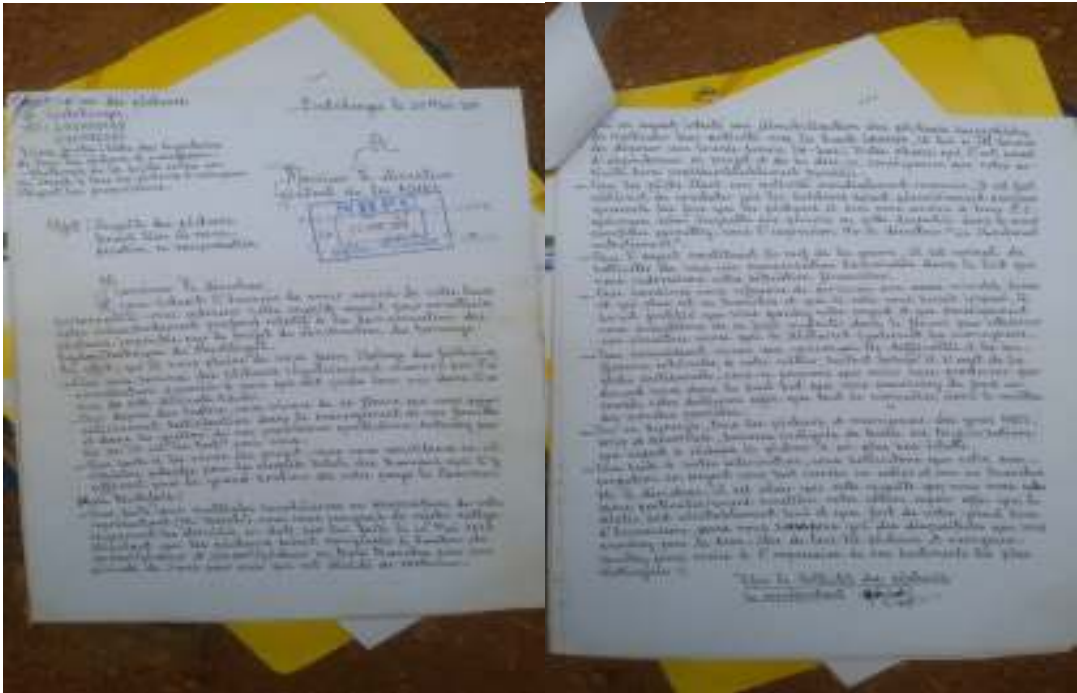


Photo: Petitions from fishermen to the NHPC

III. CONCLUSION

At the end of the mission to the construction area of the Nachtigal Hydroelectric Dam, those whose farms were impacted clearly expressed that the process of crop compensation for farmers are satisfactory. However, the fishermen, sanders and restorers in the construction area of the hydroelectric dam are dissatisfied with the financial compensation that NHPC has made available to some. The promises and livelihood restoration plans of NHPC which the communities and the socio-professional corps say they were not given the opportunity study/argue compensations proposed by NHPC during community consultation have not been respected by NHP. Therefore, the sandblasters, fishermen and restorers have filed in petitions with NHPC asking them to fulfil its promises to them.