



Human Rights and Conservation: A New Course Curriculum for Central African Conservation Practitioners

In March 2021, a new Human Rights and Conservation course curriculum was launched at Garoua Wildlife College in Cameroon, to educate existing and future conservation practitioners on the imperative of protecting human rights in the context of protected area management. Developed with the guidance of a leading anthropologist and with input and review from a range of Central African and international interdisciplinary experts and on-the-ground practitioners, the new curriculum focuses on complex human rights issues and conservation practices and centers on the region, allowing students to reflect on real and relevant challenges playing out within Central Africa's protected areas.

THE MODULE

Designed for higher education institutions in the Network of Forestry and Environmental Training Institutions of Central Africa (RIFFEAC) and other institutions in the region, the module aims to help students understand the complexity and challenges involved in the protection of human rights in the context of sustainable forest and natural resource management. The module is also to be used to train future and current eco-guards and rangers and is delivered through a combination of lectures, discussions, and field visits.

The curriculum is holistic, exploring the idea of human rights more generally, while also touching on topics specific to human rights within protected areas. Lessons cover indigenous rights, participatory conflict resolution, economic analysis of local markets, hunting, the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) process, gender and conservation, and more. Required and suggested readings are diverse and include articles that explore specific case studies from Central Africa to ensure that the course is a contextually relevant and constructive tool for current and future conservation practitioners.

Since its launch at Garoua College, the module has also been introduced at the Integrated Polytechnic Regional College in Kitabi (IPRC Kitabi) in Rwanda, with plans to do the same at the National School of Water and Forests in Gabon (ENEF Gabon). To date, over seventy-five students and five professors and teachers from across the region have completed the module.

LOOKING AHEAD

In partnership with RIFFEAC, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) hope to expand the use of this curriculum through a MOOC system in collaboration with the Programme on African Protected Areas & Conservation (IUCN-PAPACO). This will make the module directly available to all forestry and environment government staff and universities across Central Africa. In addition to the human rights module, USFS and RIFFEAC have also recently launched modules on integrated landscape management and economic evaluation, with plans for the latter to be expanded into an Economic Valuation of Biodiversity master's course. This course would help second-year master's students explore financial concepts associated with biodiversity conservation and climate change.

The new human rights and conservation curriculum is the product of a close collaboration between USFWS and USFS programs in Central Africa, with funding support from the U.S. Agency for International Development's Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (USAID/CARPE). USAID's CARPE program has worked since 1995 to help protect and preserve forests and biodiversity within the region.

AT A GLANCE:

- The new Human Rights module has been introduced at **three** institutions across the region since its launch in 2021
- Seventy-five students** and **five professors** have already taken the course
- The course discusses **indigenous rights, participatory conflict resolution, hunting, the FPIC process, gender and conservation, and more**

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