Plant diversity and development: the activities of the Botanic Garden Meise in Central Africa

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Botanic Garden Meise

- Founded in 1796
- 92 ha
- 18,000 kinds of plants
- 4 million herbarium specimens
- An extensive botanical library with 200,000 volumes
- 187 employees, 100 volunteers, 20 guides

Mission:
Building a sustainable future through discovery, research and conservation of plants
Botanic Garden Meise and (Central) Africa

- The largest collection of central African botanical data in the world
- 85% of all herbarium specimens collected in DRC
- Vast research expertise in the flora of Central Africa
- Long standing collaborations in Congo, Gabon, Cameroun, Madagascar, Benin, South Africa,…
Flora of central Africa: knowledge base for conservation and sustainable exploitation

- Taxonomic reference work with descriptions of and identification keys to 10,000 plants of Central Africa
- Only 60% completed, hence incomplete knowledge of diversity jeopardising ecological, economic (impact), ethnobotanical and conservation studies
- New ambition to finish the flora by 2030
- Similar project for Gabon with Naturalis (Leiden).
Fungi for conservation and development

- Training local scientists & capacity building
- Ecosystem functioning and services
- Conservation through valorisation

It’s about people and fungi
The results are:

- Reinforcing the role of botanical gardens in the National Parks Institution
- Reviving botanic research capacity (including herbarium management)
- Establishing links between in situ and ex situ conservation: DR Congo botanical gardens (Kisantu and Kinshasa) as showcase for the parks
- Building links between urban populations and in situ conservation
Capacity building in Central African herbaria

- Rehabilitation of collections
  - Advice on rehabilitation of infrastructure
  - Restauration of specimens
  - Protection against insects
  - Digitalisation of the collections
  - Creation of databases
- Training of personnel (technicians and scientists)
- Fund raising
Virunga National Park

1. Managing trade-offs between conservation and development

Matebe Hydroelectric plant: rural electrification as a catalyst for job creation and poverty alleviation
- To harmonise hydroelectric plant with the natural landscape;
- To restore degraded habitats;
- To identify, study, and conserve botanical species;
- To train agronomists staff
- To promote environmental education in schools, civil society and media

Hydroelectric plant
Matebe:
- 12.6 Mw
- 140,000 users
- 300 - 450 workers each day
- 20 million US$
- Buffet Foundation, EU
2. Preserving local flora using *in situ* and *ex situ* methods

- **Research**: Identifying and inventorying species to restore degraded habitats.
- **Nurseries**: producing seedlings from local plants, production of ornamental plants.
- **Training**: horticulture, agronomy, botany
3. Environmental education: a new challenge in post conflict area

- Highlighting the role of the park among the population in preserving one of the richest regions for biodiversity in Africa;
- Reinforcing the linkage between park, ecosystem services and development in a "modern botanical garden" around a sustainable energy resource;
- Rising awareness and sensitivity about plants and ecosystems (showing different plants from other regions of DRCongo);
- Launching guide training program;
- Organising school visits.
Thank you… the most amazing things happens outside your comfort zone…

Thank you