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Press release : 2015 : 11 : 13 : Research Leads Grad Student, Professor to Cameroon

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USFSP News

Research Leads Grad Student, Professor to Cameroon

Research on the impact of climate change led USF St. Petersburg graduate student Adam Flanery and [Dr. Richard Mbatu](#), assistant professor of Environmental Science, Policy and Geography, a quarter of the way around the world to Cameroon.

At the beginning of the Fall semester, Flanery, 34, and faculty advisor Mbatu out to the central African country on a 20-day trip to collect data for his thesis “Forest Community Integration and Collective Agency in Korup National Park, Cameroon: Interactions with Forest Policies and the REDD+ Mechanism.” The thesis looks at the societal structures of the highly heterogeneous forest communities in Cameroon’s southwest region near Korup National Park that have been impacted by a number of agricultural and environmental policies in recent years.

“By understanding the nature of these communities and their interactions with past and current policies, I want to understand how they can be affected by the climate change mitigation strategies known as REDD+,” Flanery said.

REDD+, which stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, is being implemented in many areas of the world, from South and Central America to India and southeastern Asia. The REDD+ process in Cameroon is in its development stages.

Flanery, who received his bachelor’s degree in Chemistry at USF, was admitted into the master’s program in Environmental Science and Policy at USFSP in Fall 2014 and is slated to graduate in Spring 2016. He became interested in researching the impact of deforestation and environmental changes in the region because it is a growing area of importance for this type of research.

“The whole area around Korup has been earmarked as a future REDD project,” he said. A non-government organization released a report in early 2011 that showed how early REDD readiness planning activities in Cameroon lacked effective actions to ensure participation of the local communities and indigenous peoples. “They lacked specific plans on benefit sharing and other related important issues, and local people weren’t informed about the projects. I’m hoping to help shed some light on how RED might work there and help the people who may be impacted the most by it.”

Flanery and Mbatu hope their trip also will help to create opportunities for future partnerships and research. While in Cameroon, they worked with local leaders from several villages in the

area, including non-government organization workers from the World Wildlife Foundation and the Center for Environment and Development.

“We’re hoping to keep in contact with those people and talk to them about future research opportunities,” Flanery said.

He presented his research data and talked about his fieldwork experience for his thesis during the USFSP Student Research Colloquium in October.



From left: Graduate student Adam Flanery and Dr. Richard Mbatu. Photo courtesy of Adam Flanery.



Many of the roads in Cameroon must be traversed by foot or motorcycle. Photo courtesy of Adam Flanery.



Right: Dr. Richard Mbatu draws water from a village well. The well was a benefit of some of the policies that were put into effect with the establishment of the Korup National Park in 1986.





