

# Social Assessment of Protected Areas (SAPA) at Monts de Cristal, Gabon



**The Monts de Cristal National Park (MCNP)** was legally designated in 2002 and fully established on the ground in 2005. The park covers an area of 1,200 km<sup>2</sup> of rainforest and is state owned and managed by Gabon's National Parks Agency (ANPN). A committee – Comité Consultatif de Gestion Locale (CCGL) - was recently formed to engage local stakeholders in park management.

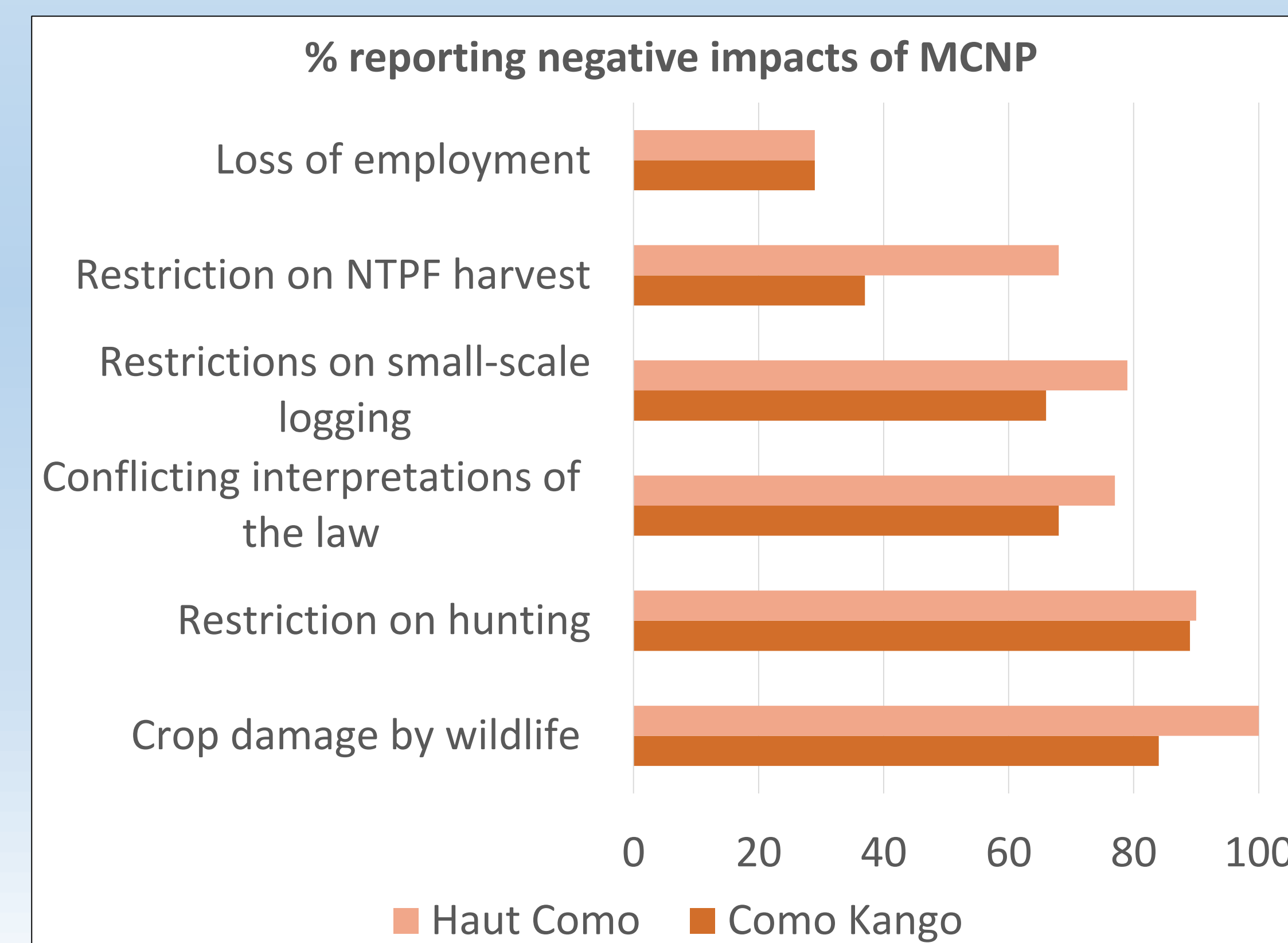
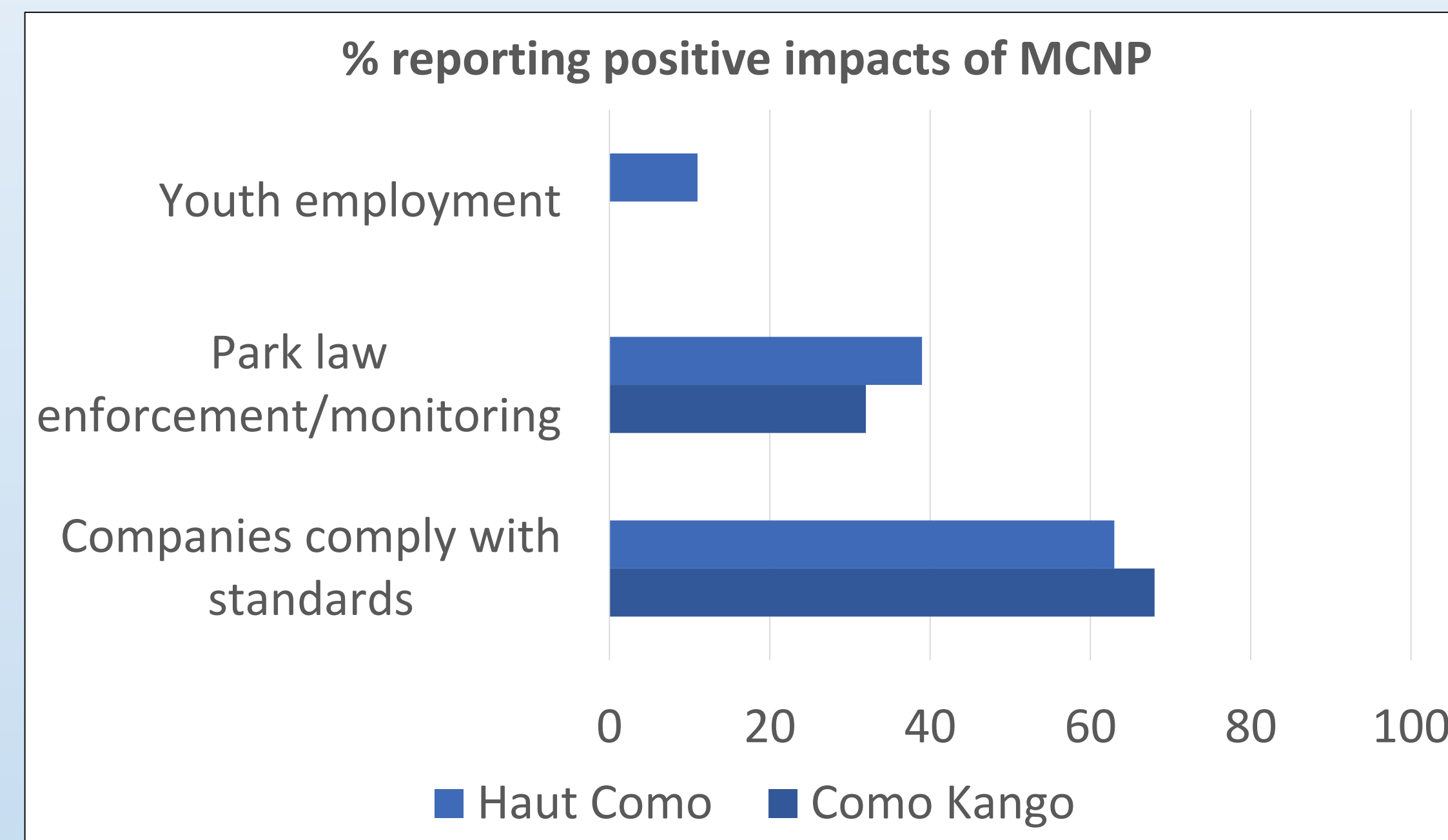
No hunting or resource use is permitted within the MCNP, but hunting for local consumption is allowed in the buffer zone. Revenue from tourism is limited and while there is a hydroelectric dam within the park there is no arrangement for the communities to benefit.

**SAPA** is a multi-stakeholder methodology that assesses the positive and negative impacts of a protected area and related conservation and development activities on the wellbeing of communities living within and around the PA.

The SAPA assessment included community and stakeholder workshops and a survey of 41 women and 59 men from 100 households. The assessment was conducted in the period July 2014 to March 2015 and was facilitated by staff of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) working in collaboration with ANPN staff.

The results suggest that the most significant positive impact of the MCNP is forcing logging and mining companies that operate in the vicinity of park to abide by the social and environmental safeguards that exist in national law. Second in significance is the contribution of ANPN's law enforcement staff to general **security in the area**.

The most significant negative impacts are **human wildlife conflict** (particularly elephants) and the **ban on hunting in the park**. Related to this is conflicting interpretations of the law regarding bushmeat possession. Park staff say local people don't respect the law while local people claim that park staff always assume they're breaking the law.



In terms of **governance**, people were asked whether they know of the local stakeholders' committee that serves as the mechanism for community participation in park management (the CCGL) – exactly half of interviewees knew of its existence, but only 12 % knew the committee's name, and 66 % said they had never met anyone who is on the committee. Regarding information, 75 % of interviewees reported that they have insufficient information about MCNP. In terms of relationships, almost half of all interviewees reported that their relationship with ANPN staff is "very good" or "good", followed by 23 % responding "average", and 28 % responding "bad" or "very bad". Slightly more women described their relationship as "very bad".

The final stage of SAPA is to move **from assessment to action** through a multi-stakeholder process of sharing the results and jointly developing recommendations for action. At MCNP the following actions are already being implemented:

- Sharing information with communities on techniques to protect crops from elephants.
- Support to communities to manufacture beehives for use in elephant control.