
Gabon: logging companies' promised "development"

Gabon's primary rainforests are disappearing at a high speed. Logging of precious tropical wood is practised as a depredatory activity, where transnational logging companies, that hold huge concessions, make big money, while local communities have to bear the costs (see WRM Bulletin 28).

Logging in the Mingouli region, near Libreville, is an example of the above. At the community of Ovan, people are concerned by destructive logging activities that are devastating the region, carried out within a framework of negligence by the authorities of the Waters and Forests Administration, and the lack of interests by politicians.

Under the pretext that local people are not able to "develop", logging companies are depriving them of their forests, paying scarce sums of money for coveted tropical wood -as okoume and other species- and causing negative effects on people's livelihoods and their environment.

A scarcity of wildlife -used by local communities- due to increasing deforestation has been denounced. Additionally, the promised "development" has never come true. Logging companies do not invest in the villages, and the promised new schools and infrastructure have not arrived to benefit their inhabitants. Once they enter the area, they take as much precious wood as possible and forget about their promises.

The main companies responsible for these damages are: Rougier-Océan, SHM, FOX, BSG, Sélectionna, Leroy, and Lutexo which have logged or are presently logging in the region. Even if local dwellers feel cheated and disillusioned by the companies' false promises, and feel abandoned by those who have the obligation to defend the country's resources, they are now organizing themselves to resist further destruction and to save the country's rainforests.

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