
Logging in Gabon: the French colonial approach

Gabon is one of the richest in biodiversity and less populated countries of Africa. Until a few years ago, 85% of its forests were primary rainforests, inhabited by indigenous peoples. However, the current development model --aimed at the exploitation of wood, oil, uranium and other minerals-- is rapidly destroying those rainforests.

Logging is carried out everywhere and transnational logging companies are active agents of the destruction of the tropical forests in this country. Livelihoods of the Pygmy population are disappearing, while gorillas, chimpanzees, mandrills and elephants are in danger of extinction as a consequence of hunting.

One specifically rich forest --the Ipassa Mingouli on the Ivindo River-- has been the subject of negotiations between Gabonese authorities, the Project for Conservation and Sustainable Development Ipassa-Mingouli and institutions such as IUCN (the World Conservation Union), the European Union (EU) and UNESCO.

In November 1995 the Rougier Group --the French timber company who has its logging concessions in the area of the Project - and IUCN signed an agreement for a sustainable development of natural resources in the area, financially supported by the EU. Due to various facts, the EU and IUCN delayed the beginning of the project. In the meantime, the Rougier Group, without informing its partners, deeply logged inside the core conservation zone of the Ipassa Mingouli Project and opened roads for logging trucks.

This invasion, carried out by the Rougier Group in the core conservation zone of the Project, was discovered during the CNN shooting for Wild Planet programme by the CNN journalist Gary Strieker and the Italian activist Giuseppe Vassallo of WEESA, a recently created environmental network of students from European Universities.

These events show the social and environmental impacts of the activities of transnational logging companies in tropical countries, whose profits stem from the destructive exploitation of local resources to supply wood for parquet floors and furniture to some privileged people in the North.

Source: Giuseppe Vassallo WEESA (World Eco Emergency Students Action).