

Sold down the river

The need to control transnational forestry corporations: a European case study



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ONE IN A SERIES OF REPORTS ON TRANSNATIONAL
CORPORATIONS AND THEIR IMPACTS ON FORESTS
AND FOREST-DEPENDENT PEOPLES

BY ***Forests Monitor***

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Material in this report has been taken from published sources, official documents and field visits and care has been taken to ensure its accuracy. The situation with regard to forest companies and their operations changes rapidly, however, and comments and additional information will be welcome.

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Preface

THIS REPORT is the thirdⁱ in a series which focuses on the social, environmental, economic and political impacts of transnational corporations (TNCs) on forests and forest peoples. The reports present analysis and case studies of particular sectors, countries or regions and examine key companies' activities, political connections and *modus operandi*. The reports also examine the capacity of the main actors—national governments of both the home and host countries; civil society; relevant intergovernmental institutions and TNCs themselves—to mitigate the negative impacts of TNC operations. The selection of the case studies is based on:

- § requests for information from affected local communities;
- § particular current importance of the issue or sector;
- § relevance to national and international debate and policy on forests and forest peoples.

The question of how to control multinational corporations is not a new one and is of fundamental significance to the emerging international agenda on how to achieve environmentally and socially appropriate development. Recently, the discourse of regulation of industry has been eroded in favour of self-regulation through mechanisms such as industry-developed codes of conduct, which are increasingly being put forward as a means to achieve sustainable development. This change manifested itself most clearly in the early 1990s, with the effective closure of the UN Center on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC), a body established to monitor the activities of TNCs, and at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, when a draft chapter on the environmental responsibilities of TNCs was removed from the agenda following pressure from the business community and Northern governments.

Whilst the role of states should be to represent the best interests of their citizens, all too often it is the relatively few economically powerful voices within a state, such as TNCs and their subsidiaries, which exert the strongest influence. And whilst TNCs can be important contributors to a state's economic, social and environmental health, this is not necessarily the case: in fact, it is frequently the opposite. Accordingly, the need for control of TNCs has to be addressed.

It is our hope that this series of reports will make a significant contribution to the debate on how to achieve a balance between economic interests, the state and civil society, a balance which is geared more closely to realising sustainable and equitable forest use and management. With this objective in mind, these reports aim to:

- § Raise awareness within industry of its impact on forests and forest peoples.
- § Inform policy and decision makers of the potential dangers of unsustainable development, especially in those countries which are inviting in foreign investors, or are under pressure to liberalise their economies or to offer incentives to investors who do not adhere to strict social and environmental standards.
- § Be a resource guide for local environmental and social NGOs working on issues raised by the industry sectors and companies mentioned in the report series.
- § Bring the issue of TNC operations and their impacts on forests to the agenda of intergovernmental processes dealing with forests, particularly the UN Forest Forum.

As the series progresses, occasional papers may be produced focusing on themes which emerge from the research and data presented in the case studies.

ⁱ The first report, titled 'High Stakes; The Need to Control Transnational Logging Companies: a Malaysian case study' was published by the World Rainforest Movement and Forests Monitor in August 1998. The second report, titled 'Undermining the Forests; The Need to Control Transnational Mining Companies: a Canadian case study' was published by the Forest Peoples Programme, Philippine Indigenous Peoples Links and World Rainforest Movement in January 2000.

Glossary

AFD Agence française de développement (ex-CFD) / French government development agency

ATIBT Association Technique Internationale des Bois Tropicaux / timber trade association

BMZ Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung / German government development agency

CED Centre pour l'Environnement et Développement / NGO in Cameroon

CEFDHAC Conference on the Dense and Humid Forest Ecosystems of Central Africa – an African ministerial level initiative to facilitate co-operation for the conservation and sustainable use of the forests in the region

CFA Fr African Financial Community franc, widely used unit of currency in region, including Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Linked to the value of the French Franc (FF). (CFA Fr 100 to FF 1; Exchange rate used in this report: CFA Fr 769.32 to US\$ 1)

CIAJE Comité Inter-Associations de Jeunesse pour l'Environnement / NGO in Gabon

CIEFE Centre International d'Etudes Forestières et Environnementales / NGO in Cameroon

CIFOR Centre for International Forestry Research

CITES Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

DEG Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft mbH / part of BMZ, it invests in private development projects

DFID Department for International Development / UK government development agency

ECOFAC The regional programme of the European Union for the conservation and rational use of forest ecosystems in Central Africa

EU European Union

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FOB Free On Board, used in timber pricing

FSC Forest Stewardship Council / independent accreditation organisation for timber certification

G7 Group of seven major industrialised countries: Canada; France; Germany; Italy; Japan; UK and USA.

GDP Gross Domestic Product – the total output from all the resources located in a country, wherever the owners of the resources live.

GNP Gross National Product – the total output from resources owned by the residents of a country, wherever these resources are located. GNP equals GDP plus net property income from abroad.

GTZ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit / technical arm of the German Development Agency

HIPC Heavily Indebted Poor Countries / debt relief initiative of the World Bank and IMF

IMF International Monetary Fund

ITTO International Tropical Timber Organization

IUCN World Conservation Union (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) / An international environmental NGO

NGO Non-governmental organisation

NTFP Non-timber forest product

Pygmy An academic term that refers to the many different groups of forest hunter-gatherers living in, and on their margins, of the central African forests. It is considered offensive by many, but is increasingly being used by 'Pygmy' activists in recognition of the shared problems they face. Having the merit of being generally understood, the term is used in this report to refer to these hunter gatherer peoples of the region, who often find themselves marginalized and discriminated against when forests are developed.

SGS Société Générale de Surveillance / Swiss-based private monitoring company

UDEAC Central African customs and economic union

UFA A forest management unit, usually known as a concession

WWF World Wide Fund for Nature / An international environmental NGO

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Executive Summary

THIS REPORT EXAMINES the role of the European Union in the management of forest resources in six countries in Central Africa: Cameroon; Central African Republic; Congo (Brazzaville); Democratic Republic of Congo; Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. The reasons for this focus are three-fold. Firstly, the EU and its member states continue to play an important role politically and economically in Central Africa, not least as multilateral and bilateral creditors, directly and indirectly shaping forest development and conservation policies. Secondly, EU-based logging companies continue to be significant players in the forestry sector of the region, controlling most of the logging concessions and processing plants and playing an active role in international fora dealing with forest management in the region. Thirdly, the EU continues to be a primary destination for exports of timber products from the region.

As a result of the industrial exploitation of timber, often promoted under structural adjustment and liberalisation policies imposed by multilateral and bilateral creditors, local people in these countries who depend on forests see their rights eroded and needs ignored at local, national and international levels. Legal local tenure rights to forests are usually non-existent, a lack which is exacerbated by the allocation of large areas of forest as timber concessions. The right of local people to be involved in decision-making on the type of development opportunities most suitable to them is not recognised. As a result, alternative development paths that could generate more benefits locally are not explored and, as forests become degraded by logging, such opportunities may disappear altogether. Access to food, potable water and non-timber forest products are often made more difficult by logging operations, leading to food insecurity, a loss of locally-generated incomes, an increase in workloads for women and health problems. Industrial timber production often exacerbates or creates tensions locally, both within and between different groups, and can facilitate local level corruption. The marginalization of women and Pygmies, the over-dependence on a cash economy and, in the case of Pygmy peoples, the loss of cultural identity are effects which last long after the loggers have moved on.

All six countries featured in the report are deeply indebted to bilateral and multilateral creditors. Many pay more in debt repayments each year than they do on basic services such as health and education. Structural adjustment and liberalisation policies imposed by creditors encourage the industrial exploitation of timber as a means of increasing government revenue, but often such revenue – if it is captured by the government at all – is used to service debt. Other issues compound the problems: corruption is often endemic; a small elite benefits from development policies whilst the

majority of the population remain in poverty; the state's capacity to monitor and enforce legislation is minimal, and exacerbated by structural adjustment policies which limit the number of civil servants and their pay.

Even if forests are viewed simply as a source of timber, forestry operations are still associated with a number of serious problems. Illegal logging and the smuggling of timber are rampant in Central Africa. As much as half the timber felled in Cameroon, for example, is believed to be illegal. Forestry companies have generally operated without forest management plans and timber extraction is unsustainable. Most operations have mined the forest for valuable species before moving on to new forest areas, rather than managing the forest so as to obtain subsequent harvests.

In terms of what logging companies provide for local people, workers and their families in isolated forest areas, a complex picture emerges from the ground. European companies often claim that they provide social and economic benefits in the localities where they operate. Companies often represent the outside world to many local people, operating as a surrogate state in many instances. The reliance by local people, however, on the relative benevolence of a small number of transnational corporations for basic services such as health and education does not foster sustainable development that is equitable and lasting.

Some local people and communities do obtain employment and various social goods from forestry companies, such as schools, clinics, roads and chapels. Such infrastructure, however, is usually geared towards providing a base for workers rather than long-term sustainable development with equitable access for all. In many cases, promised infrastructure either does not materialise or is of such poor quality that it fails to provide even basic services, for example, clinics may have no adequately trained staff or medicines. Companies' provision of infrastructure is of variable standards, even when the same company is operating in different locations.

In this context, the purported long-term net benefits of the international timber trade, which are supposed to accrue to the exporting country and trickle down to local communities, need to be reassessed. The real net contribution, if any, of industrial forest exploitation has yet to be determined or demonstrated to be positive. Buyers of timber produced under these circumstances may actually be generating poverty by removing the resources upon which people depend for their livelihoods.





The six Central African countries featured in this report – Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon

Introduction

THE COUNTRIES OF THE Central African region, through which the huge Congo River and its tributaries flow, are rich in natural resources – oil, diamonds and other minerals, as well as forests. But despite this wealth, the countries' peoples are among the poorest in the world and their governments remain deeply indebted to multilateral institutions and the former colonial powers.

The six Central African countries featured in this report – Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon – all contain large expanses of rainforest that have provided livelihoods, building materials and medicines to millions of forest-dependent peoples. These countries' governments, often under strict structural adjustment and liberalisation policies imposed by multilateral and bilateral creditors, are promoting industrial timber exploitation in most of their forest areas whilst local people have no opportunities to participate meaningfully in deciding how best to use forest resources. Although governments and creditors actively promote transnational private investment in the forestry sector, they have done little to establish a framework for controlling these private interests. Forestry and environment laws, which provide a minimum operating standard, are often unclear and are rarely enforced. This has led to forest policies that, on the one hand, undermine the livelihoods and increase the insecurity of local peoples whilst, on the other, facilitate the dominance of unaccountable corporations.

Transnational companies should not separate their operations from the broader political framework within which they operate. Political conflicts within countries add to the difficulties of operating there and also throw up ethical dilemmas about direct or indirect support for repressive regimes and factions. Timber sector revenues may fuel conflict directly, as has happened in Liberia and Cambodia. If logging advances into areas of existing conflict within the Central African region, political, social and economic problems will be exacerbated, particularly if the prevalent haphazard and illegal forestry practices continue. Insecurity generated by unsustainable logging operations, such as loss of rights to forest resources and declining food availability, may also produce conflict in the longer term.

Forests Monitor believes that there should be regulatory frameworks within which transnational corporations operate, both in the countries of operation and in the countries where they are headquartered, that foster accountability and that put the needs and rights of forest-dependent peoples at the heart of their actions. Increasingly, civil society in Africa is finding a voice to speak out against human rights abuses, the burden of debt and environmental degradation. Such movements should be supported so that they can play an increasing role in defining and establishing equitable development goals that respect forest-dependent peoples' livelihoods and knowledge.

This report examines the political, social and economic context for forest management policies in each of the six Central African countries and focuses on the transnational logging companies headquartered in the European Union (EU) that operate there. The reasons for this focus are three-fold. Firstly, the EU continues to play an important role politically and

economically in Central Africa, directly and indirectly shaping forest development and conservation policies. Secondly, EU-based logging companies continue to be significant players in the forestry sector of the region, controlling most of the logging concessions and processing plants and playing an active role in international fora on forest management in the region. Thirdly, the EU continues to be the primary destination for exports of timber products from the region. For these reasons, EU member states, and the multilateral institutions of which they are a part, can and should play a strategic role in establishing sustainable principles by which EU-headquartered companies should operate.

Logging trucks in Cameroon



Part I

Regional Overview

People and forests in Central Africa

THE CONGO BASIN contains the second largest area of tropical rainforest in the world after the Amazon Basin. Renowned for its biodiversity, this forest is home to culturally diverse peoples who directly depend on the forest for food, building materials and medicines. Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and subsistence agriculture have traditionally formed the basis of local livelihoods and exchange networks between different groups of people living in these forest areas. Social interactions have involved complex sets of economic, social and power relationships between and within these groups. For example, Pygmies have traditionally hunted bushmeat, collected honey and other NTFPs from the forest which they trade with neighbouring Bantu farmers for agricultural products and other goods. The relationships between these groups, however, have rarely been based on equality, and Pygmies have often found themselves discriminated against. However, all the people who live in and depend on the rainforests of Central Africa, whether hunter-gatherers or sedentary farmers and fisherpeople, are invariably excluded from decision-making concerning the management and use of the forests upon which they depend for their livelihoods and, in the case of Pygmy groups, for their spiritual and cultural identity. This exclusion means that local peoples' needs are not taken into account when governments, often under pressure from multilateral and bilateral creditors, decide on forest management strategies.

Local people have few or non-existent tenure rights to the forests upon which they depend. Development policies, often imposed by multilateral and bilateral creditors, and implemented by remote, weak and sometimes corrupt governments, allocate large tracts of these forests to sometimes equally corrupt forestry companies as concessions for timber extraction. The balance of power regarding forest use, management and rights tilts even further away from local people and towards private interests, often represented by a few transnational corporations. In this framework, the opportunities for fostering local-level development that

People who live in and depend on the rainforests of Central Africa are excluded from decision-making concerning their management and use.

Villagers in south east Cameroon



Local communities see just a tiny fraction, if any, of the money generated by the international trade in timber... On the other hand, the arrival of large-scale forestry operations disrupts the existing local livelihood base and access to forest resources.

brings long-term benefits equitably to all local people, whilst safeguarding the ecological importance of the forests, are rarely considered. At worst, such opportunities are lost altogether as resources become degraded.

Whilst those who promote industrial forestry as the best development option for Central Africa's forests highlight the direct benefits of employment provision and infrastructure development such as schools, clinics and churches, evidence from the ground presents a complex and far from positive picture of the impact of such operations on local development and livelihoods.

Part of the rationale for promoting industrial timber production is that the sector contributes to poverty alleviation in the region. This rationale needs to be challenged. A 1991 Oxfam report concluded that opening up Africa's forests to exploitation would "cause an increase in poverty rather than its resolution", whilst a 1990 report for the European Community stated that "forestry development and deforestation generally go hand in hand with the redistribution of wealth from the poorest ... to a national elite and foreign companies (and) widen the gap between the rich and the poor in tropical countries".¹ In February 2000, a workshop organised by the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID) found that industrial timber production in Cameroon "tends to benefit a small minority (often foreign investors), and its contribution to poverty alleviation is minimal."² The workshop made a series of recommendations which would need to be implemented before local development could be equitably achieved, including greater transparency in the use of the income generated by forest resources; equity in the redistribution of income; institutional decentralisation; and creating favourable conditions for local people to help alleviate poverty themselves.³

Timber is a valuable commodity, fetching high prices on international markets. In 1999, the value of timber imported into the EU from the Central African countries featured in this report was US\$ 609 million.⁴ Yet the producing countries struggle to provide even basic services to the majority of their populations. Although specific social development projects may be outlined in the logging agreement between the government and companies, these projects are

The Moabi issue

By Catarina Cardoso

Growing up to 60 metres tall and 5 metres in diameter, Moabi is one of the largest trees found in the forests of the Congo Basin.¹ Its timber is exploited in Cameroon, Gabon – where production is rapidly increasing – and, to a lesser extent, in Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of Congo.² Moabi is very fragile in terms of regeneration since it flowers late – not till 50 or 70 years of age – and fruit production only occurs once every three years.³ Indiscriminate logging thus easily leads to its extinction⁴ and in some areas Moabi has indeed already been logged out.⁵ Moabi trees are particularly important to the local populations and disputes with logging companies over this species are frequent, especially in Cameroon.

For Bantu villagers and Baka Pygmies (particularly the Bantu and Baka women), Moabi is important in economic, cultural and medicinal terms.⁶ Moabi fruits are edible and from the bark of the tree they extract remedies for dental and back problems.⁷ From the fruit seeds they produce Karité oil, which is used for both consumption and trade. Demand in Cameroonian markets for Karité oil is higher than supply and revenues from selling moabi oil represent an important source of income. Estimates suggest that oil revenues for a 10 year period surpass timber

revenues for a tree of 100 centimetres diameter, the minimum size trees must legally be when logged.⁸ The tree's non-timber value is not only recognised by local markets but also by the French cosmetics industry which has shown an interest in the oil.⁹

Moabi is also valuable in international timber markets and demand from Southern Europe is particularly high.¹⁰ However, in relative terms Moabi does not appear to represent a significant component of companies' revenues and country exports. In Cameroon, Moabi timber represents 10% of companies' total production and between 3.4% and 5% of the total export value of logs of all species.¹¹ The main Moabi exporter is Gabon, whose exports have considerably increased in the last three years, from 26,052 cubic metres in 1996 to 39,724 cubic metres in 1998.¹² Cameroon produced 33,000 cubic metres in 1997 and 35,000 cubic metres in 1998.¹³ In Equatorial Guinea production is also on the rise, and estimates suggest that it doubled from 1,000 cubic metres in the early 1990s, to 2,000 cubic metres in 1999.¹⁴

Moabi trees located within 5 kilometres of the village cannot be logged unless the chief of the village agrees to it and in such a case the population must be compensated. In practice, most Moabi trees near villages have been logged and the local population have not always been compensated.¹⁵ Local populations in Cameroon have often

demand recognition of their rights but without success.¹⁶

Moabi logging practices are generally unsustainable and the species may disappear in a large part of its original areas of distribution in 10 to 20 years.¹⁷ In the Dja forests of Cameroon nearly all valuable trees are logged without companies undertaking any initiative to ensure the regeneration of species.¹⁸ Over-harvesting occurs because companies do not comply with the law as well as because the law itself is not sufficiently protective of Moabi. Companies regularly disrespect the legal requirement that trees of less than 100 centimetres diameter should not be logged.¹⁹ In July 1999, for example, logs of only 65 centimetres and 85 centimetres diameter were found in the French port of Nantes-St.-Nazaire.²⁰ However, even if only trees of 100 centimetres diameter were cut, the regeneration of Moabi would still be at serious risk.²¹ Specialists argue that it is necessary to increase the minimum diameter of trees logged and to implement measures to conserve "mother trees" that can ensure regeneration of the species.²² World Bank staff go further, advocating a total ban on Moabi logging and arguing that "management plans must be devised in collaboration with local people to ban logging of similar [to moabi] trees".²³

sometimes undertaken in lieu of tax payments or under contract to the government and thus are undertaken at the government's, not the company's, expense. Logging companies have not always met their formal or informal agreements with regard to social provision.⁵ In some instances, meanwhile, taxes have been paid by companies for local infrastructure developments which have not materialised⁶ or which are so poorly equipped or staffed that they are unable to provide basic services (*see* boxes pages 19 and 50).

Local communities themselves see just a tiny fraction, if any, of the money generated by the international trade in timber. Some employment opportunities arise, but not necessarily for people living locally; employment is often short-term and remuneration is generally low. Facilities for the workforce are often provided but the quality of provision can be very poor and other people have varying rights of access to these facilities. On the other hand, the arrival of large-scale forestry operations disrupts the existing local livelihood base and access to forest resources. NTFPs become scarce, resulting in a direct loss of income for many local peoples; women and the elderly are particularly badly affected as they are often the ones to collect and trade in NTFPs, providing valuable food and cash for families. The changing roles and relationships which develop within and between communities generates conflict and often results in the marginalisation of certain communities, such as Pygmies, and community members, such as women and the elderly. Some of the most valuable trees in terms of timber have been highly valued locally for their many uses. The over-exploitation of these species can seriously disrupt local livelihoods and lead to a net loss of cash income for many (*see* the Moabi and Sapelli boxes).

Forestry operations act as a magnet, often attracting thousands of newcomers deep into the rainforest. These new settlements are totally dependent on forestry activities; once the timber extraction finishes, the towns invariably collapse. Such boom-and-bust towns are not sustainable: they cause social tensions between newcomers and existing communities, increase pressure on natural resources including bushmeat, and facilitate alcoholism and prostitution.

Pygmies are particularly affected by the presence of forestry companies, as they become even more marginalised in relation to their farming neighbours and the newcomers to the forest.⁷ In the logging camps of the southern forests, especially around the borders between Central African Republic, Cameroon and Congo (Brazzaville), Pygmies make up between 30% and 47% of the workforce.⁸ Well-known for their skills in the forest, they are hired as guides to find the best trees and to hunt for bushmeat.⁹ But Pygmies are discriminated against in relation to other ethnic groups working in the camps, being given fewer amenities than the latter. In terms of health, food and spiritual life, they also suffer. Diseases such as alcoholism, malaria, ulcers and tuberculosis, for example, are widespread in the camps.

With the degradation of forests, traditional ways of life are being eroded, threatening food security and livelihoods.¹⁰ Whilst the hunting of bushmeat has been a traditional livelihood for forest peoples, in particular Pygmies, the development of a large-scale commercial trade in bushmeat is relatively recent and has been directly and indirectly facilitated by the development of timber production. As a result of the commercialisation of the bushmeat trade, wildlife populations are being decimated, including rare and endangered animals such as elephants and lowland gorillas. In response, partnerships are being formed between the private sector, international environmental NGOs and government ministries to reduce the hunting of non-protected species, to establish bushmeat substitution programmes, for example fish breeding and chicken farms, and to eliminate the hunting of protected species such as primates and elephants.

Other challenges, however, remain largely unaddressed: how to ensure that development of these fragile forest areas does not lead to the deterioration of the forests themselves; how to ensure that traditional rights of indigenous forest peoples are upheld; how to ensure that development and/or conservation is inclusive and equitable, and does not favour one group over another; how to ensure that the benefits of development are fairly distributed over the long-term between private companies, the state and local populations; how to protect the integrity of key areas of biological and cultural importance in an equitable and culturally sensitive way; how to mitigate or halt commercial forestry operations if they generate poverty, degrade the forests and diminish local peoples' future rights to healthy forests. The solutions to some of these problems will require radical changes in power balances, approaches to forest management and policy formation.

Indigenous Uses For The Sapelli Tree In Northern Congo

By Jerome Lewis

For all ethnic groups living in northern Congo the sapelli tree (*boyo* in Mbendjele and *mboyo* in Lingala) represents an important and highly valued resource. Its uses fall into three categories: Food, medicine, and as a construction material.

Large sapelli are the unique host of the *Imbrasia (Nudaurelia) oyemensis* caterpillar, a highly regarded local delicacy. Their importance is shown by the period when the caterpillars fall from the trees being named 'caterpillar season' and studies have shown that 75% of the protein eaten by Pygmies at this time is from caterpillars.¹ Caterpillars fall from large emergent trees during the rainy season when game is difficult to hunt, fishing is unsuccessful and next season's crops are not yet ripe. Both farmers and hunter-gatherers consider the caterpillars a blessing.

Sapelli caterpillars are especially valued for their delicious taste and great numbers collected in a short time. Their small size (c.60mm by 15mm) and firm texture allow them to dry out exceptionally well for preservation. Sapelli caterpillars are a high value trade item in local commerce. Collecting caterpillars is a communal task providing an important source of income for women and the elderly.

The most important medicinal properties of sapelli are the analgesic and anti-inflammatory effects of the bark and outer trunk. It may also have certain anti-bacterial properties.² It is commonly used for the treatment of the severe head-aches associated with malaria, of swollen and painful eye infections and also to relieve exhausted and painful feet.

The qualities of durability, strength, buoyancy and water-resistance result in sapelli wood being considered the best for making pirogues. Sapelli is also desired for the central roof-supports of local houses.

National governments have continued the forest exploitation policies introduced by the colonial powers. They are supported and encouraged in this by the multilateral and bilateral institutions to whom they are heavily indebted.

EU involvement in Central Africa's rainforests

MANY ARGUE THAT the Central African region is still subject to a system of neo-colonialism, perpetuated by the former colonial powers, foreign capital and a few powerful elites at national levels.¹¹ France, Belgium, Germany, the UK and Spain all played a significant part in the colonial history of the region and all continue to be powerful partners in terms of trade in resources and the direction of macro-economic policies and conservation initiatives. They are joined in their endeavours by their EU partners, North America and multilateral development banks, notably the World Bank and IMF. There are countless instances that highlight which of the groups of countries – the colonial powers or their former colonies – maintain the balance of power, not least the structural adjustment policies and conditionalities imposed by creditors. President Omar Bongo of Gabon, one of the African leaders most closely allied with French administrations, is said to have described France without Africa as being like a car without petrol and that Africa without France was like a car without a driver.¹² For the most part, the former colonial countries, together with the multilateral institutions of which they are a part and the transnational corporations that are headquartered in them, remain firmly in the driving seat, dictating the terms of development and conservation in the region.

Since their independence several decades ago, most of the six countries featured in this report – Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), Equatorial Guinea and Gabon – have experienced periods of often violent political turmoil. None have yet achieved a robust democracy founded on the full involvement of their citizens. All six countries find themselves unable to provide even basic levels of education and healthcare for many of their citizens. They all have enormous debt burdens, paying multilateral and bilateral creditors huge sums in debt repayments each year. These crippling debt repayments, a lack of democratic space for meaningful civil society involvement and corruption inhibit the emergence and implementation of policies that would facilitate ecologically sustainable and socially just development.

Forest management policies

Within this context, national governments have continued the forest exploitation policies introduced last century or earlier by the colonial powers. They are supported and encouraged in this by the multilateral and bilateral institutions, to whom they are heavily indebted, as part of the structural adjustment policies and economic liberalisation programmes imposed by these institutions as a condition of further lending. Thus, the primary goal of forest policies in the region is to promote industrial timber production for export by allocating most of the forest as logging concessions. The policy framework put in place to facilitate this level of industrial exploitation has little regard for local peoples' needs and rights nor the capacity of a country's institutions to monitor and enforce these policies. Forest laws themselves are often unclear or conflicting.

Regardless of the wider issues of socially just development, within this narrow view of forests as a source of timber, serious problems exist in the region's forestry sector. National laws may set a minimum standard in terms of forestry management practices, but even reaching that minimum standard seems to be the exception rather than the rule. Governments do not have the capacity to monitor forestry companies' operations nor to enforce legislation (not least because recent World Bank and IMF programmes have required reductions in the number of public employees and their salaries). Although on-the-ground data about forestry activities is scarce from all six countries, it is clear from Cameroon, where the trade's activities have begun to be monitored more closely by civil society and the Ministry responsible for forests, that illegal logging and illegal trade in timber is rampant; in the East Province, where most timber production is currently taking place, it has been estimated that 50% of timber harvested is illegal.¹³ Given the weak or non-existent capacity of other national governments to monitor companies and enforce legislation, there is little to suppose that the situation is much different in the other countries of the region.

The recent influx of Asian private capital into the Central African forestry sector has brought more aggressive and more openly short-term logging to the area, with a greater variety of species being exploited in a short space of time, primarily for log exports.¹⁴ This approach has been compared unfavourably to the selective logging techniques practised by European forestry companies. Whilst those who advocate industrial timber exploitation in Central Africa's forests argue that large concessions are required in order to practise sustainable forestry management techniques over a long period, selective logging techniques themselves are not proven to be sustainable, even in terms of sustained yields of timber over the long-term. Most European forestry companies practise selective logging, whereby they extract a few, high value timber species from the forest. Although this method of logging causes less damage to the canopy than clearcut logging, it is not without negative

environmental consequences. The search for the best trees means that companies drive roads into relatively large areas of forest to extract just a few trees. This opens up the forest to commercial bushmeat hunters who have decimated wildlife in logging areas. The technique of selecting the largest trees of a particular species has consequences for local uses and for the maintenance of biodiversity, with the regeneration of the target species not guaranteed.

Despite legislation requiring increased downstream processing in-country, such as the production of sawn wood, veneer or other products, which would bring more revenue, the export of whole logs from the region still predominates, with the processing taking place elsewhere, mainly in Europe or Asia. But value-added processing policies bring problems of their own: demand for logs to supply large processing plants leads to increased pressure on the forests, fuelling unsustainable and illegal timber harvesting. Some argue that there is already over-capacity in Cameroon if the forests are not to be destroyed.

Some European companies have admitted that forestry operations have not been sustainable in Central Africa in the past: a director of French company Rougier stated in an interview with a French trade journal that, for the last 40 years, operations generally have mined the forest.¹⁵ This unsustainable harvesting has led to companies moving into new areas of rainforest over time, leaving a trail of forest degradation in their wake. Many of the companies that have been operating for decades in Central Africa are only now starting to draw up forest management plans, although often this work is subsidised and undertaken by third parties, such as bilateral government departments or international NGOs. It is not clear to what extent European companies which operate as sub-contractors can and do insist on sustainable forest management plans when they undertake logging on behalf of other concession holders.

International financial assistance

Much of the drive towards industrial exploitation of Central Africa's forests has arisen directly out of structural adjustment and liberalisation policies imposed by multilateral and bilateral creditors. France is one of the largest bilateral lenders and aid donors to the region and French companies play a significant part in exploiting the region's forests (see table 1, page 11). Other EU member states, as well as the EU itself, have provided large amounts of financial assistance – as loans and grants – to Central African countries for decades. Funds are often used for the preparation of forest inventories, for assistance to EU forestry companies to draft forest management plans or for the establishment and running of conservation areas. The European Commission (EC) has made a number of policy statements regarding tropical forests, which have made it clear that the EC sees its role in the context of conserving tropical forests. In 1989, this included a strategy to establish actions with reference to timber trade, within which was foreseen the establishment of a code of conduct for European logging companies.¹⁶ Despite being seen as a priority, this has not happened to date. In 1995, a Forest Protocol was added to the Lomé Convention (Protocol No 10). This Protocol requests, among other things, support to assist African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries to develop sustainable forest management, and stresses the need to get wood from sustainably managed forests onto the market.¹⁷ One of the EU's largest conservation and sustainable development projects is the Conservation and Rational Utilisation of the Forest Ecosystems of Central Africa (ECOFAC), which operates in six protected areas in the region. The project was established in 1992 and has received US\$ 33 million.

The World Bank has provided technical assistance for forestry sector reform, helping with the drafting of the current forestry law in Cameroon and the draft new forestry law in Gabon, for example. This technical assistance has been firmly based on supporting the development of the industrial timber sector, with the objective of improving the efficiency of timber extraction and in particular the capturing of economic rent from the sector. Whilst the competitive tendering process introduced into Cameroon may reduce, but not eliminate, corruption among civil servants and transnational employees, the fact that the bidding process is weighted in favour of financial rather than technical merit does not encourage the promotion of sustainable forestry management, and may indeed foster short-term profit-seeking over long-term sustainable forest management (see Cameroon, p. 13).

By far the most important step towards assisting long-term sustainable development in these countries would be debt cancellation. Most debt is owed to the G7 group of countries, either directly or through the World Bank and IMF. Many of the countries in this report spend more on debt repayments than they do on health and education combined, and repay more money than they receive in grants each year. Some G7 countries have pledged to cancel at least some of the outstanding debt. The World Bank and IMF have established the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC), which will cancel some, but not all, debt of some countries (see HIPC, right). Despite the levels of poverty in each of the countries in this report, only Cameroon has qualified to have some of its debt cancelled, although this is conditional on a number of factors, including institutional reform within government regarding the forestry sector.

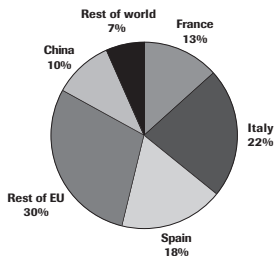
The primary goal of forest policies in the region is to promote industrial timber production for export by allocating most of the forest as logging concessions.

HIPC

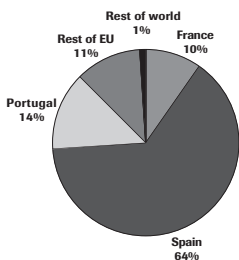
The Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) was established in 1996 by the World Bank and IMF and introduced the concept of “debt sustainability”. Creditors assess how much of its debt a country can pay off over the medium- to long-term (sustainable debt) and then write-off the remainder (unsustainable debt). Only debts accrued before a certain date qualify for HIPC, not all debt. The measurement of “sustainable” debt is based mainly on the ratio of debt service payments to export earnings, not to a country's absolute poverty or its people's poverty.

To qualify for reductions, a country must spend six years engaged in strict economic reforms under IMF supervision. It must open itself up to foreign goods, privatise state-owned enterprises, deregulate its financial and banking sectors, cut public spending and implement a poverty reduction strategy. One of the central purposes of the HIPC Initiative is to encourage private investment. An estimated half of the HIPC - designated countries will not meet the reform targets and thus will not qualify for debt relief.

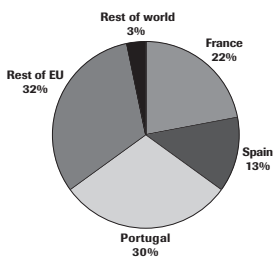
Cameroon



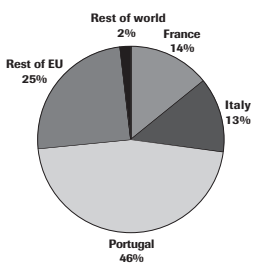
Central African Republic



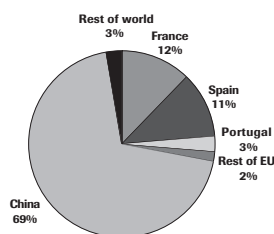
Congo (Brazzaville)



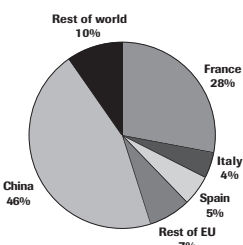
Democratic Republic of Congo



Equatorial Guinea



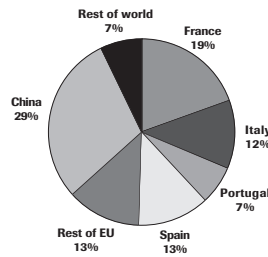
Gabon



Left and below: Wood Exports from Congo Basin Countries for 1999

Round Wood Equivalent has been used incorporating data for the major forests products commodities in the countries concerned.

Congo Basin



Right: Offloading logs from the Congo Basin in the port of Leixões, Portugal; July 2000



O'DONNELL/REUTERS

Trade

Europe has dominated the trade in timber from West and Central Africa for decades. As West Africa becomes logged out, the source of logs and rough sawn timber has shifted to elsewhere in Africa. Exports from Ghana and the Ivory Coast, for example, are in long-term decline. In Ghana, formerly a major supplier, 80% of the country's sawmills are expected to close soon and the Ivory Coast now imports wood for processing. Cameroon has become the dominant African supplier of commercially important tree species, and an increasing proportion of African primary wood products, such as logs and rough sawn timber are predicted to come from the other countries of the Congo Basin, including the Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.¹⁸ As the major importer of timber from Central and West Africa for decades, Europe is complicit in this region-wide rolling programme of deforestation.

Exports from Central Africa have increased significantly in the 1990s. Much of this is due to increased exports to Asia. China is now the single largest importing country from the Congo Basin. The EU remains the largest consuming block, accounting for 64% of round wood equivalent exports in 1999. Exports to Asia are primarily of logs whilst the EU imports logs and processed timber. Within the EU, France is the largest importer of timber from Africa, followed by Spain, Italy and Portugal.¹⁹

Illegal production and trade

A significant proportion of the timber from the Congo Basin region that is traded internationally is either being felled or exported illegally, a fact widely acknowledged by industry representatives and exporting country government officials and indicated by the discrepancies in the declared exports from producer countries and the declared imports by consumer countries. Cameroon's declared exports of logs to Portugal in 1998 were 57,038 cubic metres, for instance, but Portugal declared imports from Cameroon of almost twice as much, 91,115 cubic metres. Congo (Brazzaville) declared exports of 37,731 cubic metres of logs to Italy in 1998, while Italy declared imports from Congo (Brazzaville) some three times higher at 119,102 cubic metres.²⁰ Conflicting import/export statistics suggest bureaucratic inefficiency at best and significant illegal timber production and export at worst. Either way, the lost tax revenue to the exporting countries alone justifies the need for rigorous and transparent scrutiny.

Examples of smuggling have been discovered in Cameroon. Cameroonian customs officials visited the Douala office of United Transport Cameroon (UTC), one of Cameroon's leading road transport companies. The officials uncovered an export tax-evasion scheme for wood supposedly in transit from northern Congo but in fact of Cameroonian origin.^{21,22} They arrested employees but higher authorities for some reason ordered the officials to release those accused.²³ A recent World Bank report on the timber industry in Cameroon noted the practice of creating documents for Cameroonian timber to indicate that the timber originated from outside Cameroon and therefore was not liable to tax and other controls imposed on Cameroonian timber.²⁴

Europe imports timber from sources that cannot be verified as legal and from companies that are known to be logging illegally in the Congo Basin. Some European companies supply and/or trade in logs that may have been illegally produced or exported. Once timber or logs have left the shores of the exporting country, there are no effective courses of action that the exporting country can take. Many developing countries have limited resources with which to enforce forest policies (not least because of limits on civil service employees by the IMF). Importers may be receiving stolen or fraudulently obtained goods.

Little has been done by consuming countries to address the issues of unsustainable levels of timber production and consumption, the trade in illegally felled logs and the smuggling of timber. Any contribution that independent certification could make to tackling these problems will be endangered if non-financial barriers to trade are reduced or prohibited under World Trade Organization non-tariff measures (NTMs) rules. Such NTMs might include eco-labelling and forest certification schemes, import and export quotas, log export bans, requirements for recycling, and subsidies.²⁵ Prohibition of potentially beneficial measures would damage the prospects for the implementation of sustainable timber production, environmental integrity and poverty alleviation.

Companies

European companies directly or indirectly control most of the forests in Central Africa for timber exploitation, as concession holders and/or as sub-contractors (*see* maps pp. 34-39). The companies who undertake logging are often the main point of contact between local people and the outside world. They operate almost as a surrogate state in many remote places, and are looked upon as the main provider of basic services. However, this dependence on the relative benevolence of a handful of foreign-owned private companies is not a basis upon which sustainable development can be assured. The company profiles in Part III of this report indicate marked differences in European companies' standards of operations, even by the same companies in different countries. The best claim to operate within the laws of each country, practise technically proficient harvesting, have committed to drawing up sustainable forest management plans and provide social infrastructure for workers. The worst are involved in illegal felling of timber and/or provide no discernible benefits to workers, other than poorly paid and insecure employment. Even the best, however, have some considerable way to go before their operations can be said to contribute to equitable long-term sustainable development for all local people that respects their rights and needs and ensures the integrity of forest ecosystems for future generations.

Little has been done by consuming countries to address the issues of unsustainable levels of timber production and consumption, the trade in illegally felled logs and the smuggling of timber.

Table 1: EU-based forestry companies with logging operations in Central Africa

EU Parent Company	Central African Country/ies of Operation	Logging Subsidiaries in Country of Operation	Concessions (ha)
Alpi <i>Italy</i> 🚛 ⚙️	Cameroon	Alpicam	128,449
		Grumcan	85,812
Basso <i>Italy</i> 🚛 ⚙️	Gabon	BTIG	450,000
Bolloré <i>France</i> 🚛 ⚙️ 🚚	Cameroon	Forestière de Campo (HFC)	162,790
		SIBAF	134,765
Bruynzeel <i>The Netherlands</i> 🚛 ⚙️	Congo (Brazzaville)	Boplac (43.5%)	500,000
Danzer <i>Germany</i> 🚛 ⚙️ 💰	Democratic Republic of Congo Congo (Brazzaville)	Siforco	2,900,000
		UFA Est/SCBO	1,300,000
DLH Nordisk <i>Denmark</i> 🚛 ⚙️ 🚚 💰	Congo (Brazzaville)	Boplac (43.5%)	500,000
Feldmeyer <i>Germany</i> 🚛 ⚙️ 💰	Congo (Brazzaville)	CIB	1,150,000
Interwood <i>France</i> 🚛 ⚙️	Cameroon	Coron	136,760
	Gabon	Interwood Cameroun SHM	not known 300,000 (estimate)
Pasquet <i>France</i> 🚛 ⚙️	Cameroon	R. Pallisco	-
Rougier <i>France</i> 🚛 ⚙️ 💰	Cameroon	Cambois	145,176
	Congo (Brazzaville) Gabon	SFID	68,292
		Mokabi	370,000
SAFI <i>Spain</i> 🚛 ⚙️	Equatorial Guinea	Rougier Gabon	700,000
			30,000
Sonae <i>Portugal</i> 🚛 ⚙️	Gabon	Leroy Gabon	654,000
Thanry <i>France</i> 🚛 ⚙️	Cameroon	CFC	215,000
		J Prenant	54,457
		Propalm	125,490
		SAB	60,838
	Central African Republic	SEBC	223,130
		Thanry Centrafrique	228,000
	Gabon	Sofokad	131,200
		CEB	505,000
Vasto Legno <i>Italy</i> 🚛 ⚙️	Cameroon	EFG	100,000
		SEBAC SEFAC	88,796 62,597
Wijma <i>The Netherlands</i> 🚛 ⚙️	Cameroon	Wijma (Douala) SARL	-
Wonnemann <i>Germany</i> 🚛 ⚙️	Congo (Brazzaville)	SOCOBOIS	Not known
TOTAL			11,010,552

Key 🚛 Logging (including as subcontractor) ⚙️ Processing 🚚 Transport 💰 Trade in timber

Table 1 identifies the major EU-based forestry companies that currently have logging operations in Central Africa. Other European-based companies also have significant involvement in the timber trade from the region. For example, the French transnational corporation, Pinault Printemps Redoute, and its subsidiary, Becob, used to have logging operations in the region until recently, and the group continues to be France's top importer and processor of timber from Africa, Asia and Northern Europe.²⁶

European companies have asserted their commitment to practising sustainable forest management in the future. Many are members of timber trade associations such as the Association Technique des Bois Tropicaux (ATIBT) and the related Interafrican Forest Industries Association (IFIA). One of ATIBT's current priorities is sustainable management of tropical forests, and it plays an active role in international forums such as the Conference on the Dense and Humid Forest Ecosystems of Central Africa (CEFDHAC) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), as well as engaging in debates about timber certification.²⁷ The current president of ATIBT has stated:

*"European timber companies (timber industry) engaged in Africa are fighting against illegal felling of trees and illegal actions in forest use. Such actions have damaging effects not only for the forest but also for the trade, as companies working legally can never compete with those working illegally."*²⁸

Illegal timber production and trade is rampant in Central Africa, practices in which European companies, including ATIBT and IFIA members, are complicit.

In Cameroon, the only country in the region where rudimentary monitoring of the sector is being undertaken, formal penalties were imposed on several European companies in the year 2000 for infractions of forestry legislation (*see* Table 2 below). These reported infractions, however, are likely to be merely the tip of the iceberg, both in Cameroon and elsewhere in the region, given the institutional weaknesses in these countries. On the rare occasions when monitoring does take place, inspections are often cursory and the monitors are subject to intimidation. Most logging takes place without scrutiny while those operations that are monitored are often regulated "informally", with bribery being rife.

In conclusion, Europe, represented by governments, multilateral institutions and the private sector, shares an enormous responsibility in the management of forest resources in Central Africa. There is little evidence to date that the direction of forest policies is contributing to even the basic development goal of poverty alleviation, let alone long-term sustainable development. The six countries' internal capacity to manage forest resources in the best interests of their citizens and to ensure the future integrity of forests is examined in part II.

Table 2: Official Actions Taken Against European-Controlled Companies In Cameroon in 2000

Date infraction published	Subsidiary	European Parent	Infraction	Action Taken
December 2000	Cambois	Rougier	Exploitation outside limit of title	Fine
December 2000	RC Coron	Interwood	Exploitation of endangered /unauthorised species	Fine
December 2000	SIM	Rougier (associate company)	Non-respect of exploitation norms	Fine
July 2000	SAB	Thanry	Serious wrong-doing in their forest management activities	Disqualification from new concession allocation
July 2000	SEFAC	Vasto Legno	Serious wrong-doing in their forest management activities	Disqualification from new concession allocation
June 2000	SAB	Thanry	Exploitation outside the limits of UFA	Fine
June 2000	CFC	Thanry	Exploitation outside the limit of assiette de coupe	Fine
March 2000	SIBAF	Bolloré	Wrong demarcation of boundaries of assiettes de coupe Inadequately marked timber in log yards	Fine
March 2000	SAB	Thanry	Anarchic exploitation without respect of the boundaries of assiettes de coupe	Fine
March 2000	CFC	Thanry	Felling under-sized logs Failure to demarcate boundaries of assiettes de coupe	Fine
March 2000	EGTF RC Coron	Interwood	Anarchic exploitation outside the boundaries of assiettes de coupe	Fine
March 2000	SEBC	Thanry	Anarchic exploitation in UFA Exploitation without licence	Fine and suspension of activities for 3 months
March 2000	SEFAC	Vasto Legno	Exploitation outside assiette de coupe Non-markation of boundaries of assiette de coupe	Fine and suspension of activities for 3 months

Sources: Cameroon Tribune 24th March; 12th July; 28th December; MINEF press release no 1966, 9th June

Part II—Country Profiles

Cameroon

Political, social and economic framework

CAMEROON COVERS 475,000 square kilometres and shares borders with Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. The country is a mixture of desert plains in the north, mountains in the central regions and tropical rainforest in the south and east. The amount of forested area is estimated at 225,000 square kilometres, of which 175,000 square kilometres have been identified by the government as productive forests.¹

Cameroon was a German colony from 1884 to 1916, and then was administered by France (eastern Cameroon) and Britain (northern and southern Cameroons) until independence in 1960. President Paul Biya has been in power since 1982. Multi-party elections took place for the first time in 1992, but elections have been described as flawed by opposition parties and international observers.

The country's ethnically-diverse population totals 14.7 million. Per capita GNP in 1997 was US\$ 650, and life expectancy is 57 years. Cameroon's primary export commodity is oil, followed by timber. The country is highly indebted, mostly to bilateral creditors, the top three of whom are France, Germany and Austria, but also to the World Bank and IMF.² The country is eligible for debt relief under the terms of the Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries initiative (HIPC) (see page 9).

The country has a poor human rights record and corruption is rife from the top down, including in the forestry sector (see feature over). The international NGO Transparency International (which measures corruption at a country level rather than institutional or corporate level) has described Cameroon as the most corrupt country in the world. Companies that work in Cameroon (and their shareholders) do so in the knowledge of Cameroon's reputation – and that some entity or individual within the company is paying the bribes.³ Some companies have even argued that if they did not pay bribes they would go out of business.

The emergence of senior political and military figures in the forestry sector from the late 1990s onwards mirrors the environmentally- and socially-devastating political economy of logging in Sarawak, Malaysia.⁴ The involvement of such figures does not benefit the development of domestic forest management capacity; instead it seems to be introducing a new scale of political involvement in the forestry sector that can only hinder the application of national forest law and slow the progress of introducing transparency and accountability.

In the July 2000 round of concession allocations, three concessions (UFAs) were allocated to Ingénierie Forestière, a company connected to the son of President Paul Biya. The Secretary General for Defence owns one concession (UFA 10-029) which he has subcontracted to Société Forestière de Hazim (SFH), a company known by the Government to be logging illegally on a massive scale in the neighbouring concession (UFA 10-030) and elsewhere. In a recent controversy, six concessions (UFAs) were supposed to have been withdrawn as a result of irregularities, but three of the concessionaires retained their logging rights – all three were generals in the Cameroon army.

Forest policy and practice

The forestry industry in Cameroon is one of the few remaining sectors of the formal economy to have remained profitable in recent years. But corruption at all levels in government and illegal and bad practice in the private sector have prevented it from making a significant contribution to the country's development and its people's well-being. Consequently, the forests that are currently being exploited, as well as the people who depend on them, including local employees, villagers and indigenous peoples, are caught in a downward spiral. A workshop held in February 2000 concluded that the industrial exploitation of the country's forests made a minimal contribution to poverty alleviation and that the sector's contribution to State revenues was far below its potential because of the inadequate level of control and monitoring of forestry exploitation.⁵ Forest companies are now starting to diversify into plantations, an indication that they see their future income from forest conversion rather than sustainable forest management.

Following serious criticism of Cameroon's forest policy, the World Bank assisted the government in preparing new forestry legislation, which was passed in 1994. The lengthy



The forests that are being exploited, as well as the people who depend on them, including local employees, villagers and indigenous peoples, are caught in a downward spiral.

'The goat grazes where it is tied'

Remarks on the neo-patrimonial administration of Cameroon's forestry sector

By Samuel Nguiffo, CED

For several years now, numerous reports have attested to the frequency and extent of illegal practices in Cameroon's forestry sector. There are serious problems in the relationship between the State and donors (especially regarding the smooth-running of the structural adjustment programme). However, this is not the only thing to tarnish Cameroon's image; worse still, the different development programmes suffer from a lack of coherence and sustainability. It is important to note that the sums of money we are talking about here are sometimes extremely large and represent a real loss to the national treasury. In the context of the only justification of the industrial exploitation of wood being its profitability for the State, one has to ask why these practices continue, and consider the impunity which surrounds them.

Until now, illegal activities within the forestry sector have generally been seen as being isolated incidents. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how the 'system' operates - a system which allows illegal activities in the forestry sector to develop - and which explains the resistance to the remedies which have been put forward by the donors.

Inspired by the work of Max Weber, the theoretical outline of the neo-patrimonial state developed by Prof. Jean-François Médard offers a way of seeing how the State in Africa, and the relationship between the State's leaders and the State's resources, functions. According to Prof. Médard, the neo-patrimonial State is characterized by the following aspects:

1. The personalization of power which 'irrigates the whole of the State apparatus from the top to the bottom. Each official with a little bit of power appropriates and manages it for their own benefit [...]. At all levels it is patronage and clientelism which dominates'. This is accompanied by the institutional atrophy of the State which, in the example which concerns us, could explain the weakness of the control mechanisms (both material and human) of forestry administration.
2. The reign of the arbitrary which the administration is incapable of stopping. The behaviour of those with State authority has not been curbed by any means, they are left to their own devices - most notably in ensuring that those who rebel are brought to respect the rules of the 'system'. It is important to mention that the law, which is

supposed to prevent illegal activities, frequently helps to further this corruption. Here, for example, it is worth noting that the forestry administration enjoys the power to come to an out of court settlement with offenders of the forestry law. This legal arrangement constitutes an incitement to corrupt practices. A judge should have a legal obligation to act here.

3. Confusion between the public and the private, which is the key plank of the neo-patrimonial system. In this system, 'all governmental authority and corresponding economic rights, tend to be treated as economic gains, privately appropriated'.¹ A dialectic exists between wealth and power, and Prof. Médard indicates, 'Searching for power is to search for wealth, and searching for wealth is to search for power, because one leads to the other and vice versa.'² It is this which explains the large number of the elite, whether local or national, in the forestry industry, who see it as a way to both enjoy the spin-offs of political-administrative status, and to obtain the necessary financial resources to ensure that their status is maintained or improved. This is the way in which the administrative functions 'are distributed to those friends, family or clients as payments, in order to sustain their own position, and extract the surplus for themselves.'³ A Cameroonian saying deftly explains this situation: 'the goat grazes where it is tied'.

The management of the forestry sector in Cameroon is a good example of the patrimonial tendency of the State. The forest is contributing to an enterprise of the accumulation of private wealth among numerous people with a degree of power. In the dividing up of the 'forestry cake', the hierarchy of power is respected. Pressure on the forest is growing, other sources of wealth creation are drying up with the onset of the structural adjustment programme. There are two main routes of access to patrimonial benefits from the forest:

- § a direct route, through the conversion of a position of power into a position of exploitation (whether legal or de facto) or via capitalizing on the services provided in the normal framework of the role (granting of logging rights, but also controlling forestry exploitation);
- § an indirect route, by putting pressure on politicians and the administration to obtain favourable decisions which they would not otherwise have taken.

It is the operation of these cross-cutting strategies of wealth creation which have allowed the growth of a system of corruption around forestry in Cameroon. The management of approvals, the granting of forestry exploitation rights, the control of forestry

activities, and the management of forestry dues, are strongly influenced by this system.

Looking at the list of solicitors working in forestry in Cameroon, it is easy to spot individuals who do not fulfill the necessary recognised legal requirements in terms of their knowledge and their methods.

Also, the granting of forestry exploitation rights generally give rise to a number of irregularities which, due to their gravity and frequency, cannot be explained by anything other than pressure having been brought to bear or financial inducements having been made.

A World Bank report raises one element of the situation, 'Finally the Government has started the auction cutting rights, but in the ventes de coupe and especially in the October 1997 allocation of concessions, the specified allocation criteria have not been fully respected [...]. Concessions were awarded to the highest bidder in only 10 of the 25 cases [...]. In some cases, the awards were politically motivated.'⁴

Another strategy of access to forestry resources is through the granting of small-scale exploitation concessions (recuperations or ventes de coupe logging permits) which serve as pretexts for the extraction of unlimited amounts of wood. In a joint MINEF/World Bank report, it was noted that 'illegal exploitation is public knowledge in the urban centres, including of the officials of the administration who are based there'.⁵

The control of exploitation activities follow a similar pattern. A study recently carried out in the forestry area of East province showed that 21 % of the civil proceedings taken by forestry officials against illegal activities in the shady forestry sector were 'stopped by the intervention of someone from high-up'.⁶

The law has also played a role in the neo-patrimonial situation in the forestry sector. Two examples are sufficient to illustrate this:

- § it is possible to make a deal with the forestry administration which is recognized by the law; this is a green light to corruption. It would be preferable to force the administration to hand cases over to a judge;
- § regarding the legal situation over forestry royalties - there is no adequate protection against their embezzlement by local officials. Local people do not have the necessary skills to bring an action against those responsible for the misappropriation of public funds.

Transparency in the management of the forestry sector in Cameroon - an essential condition for the promotion of the social and ecological sustainability of the forestry sector - can only be attained if the neo-patrimonial system is challenged. Yet, it appears that no such challenge is currently envisaged.

transition phase to implementation (five years) has led to confusion and, as a result, the current legal status of some concessions is difficult to determine.⁶ The World Bank has requested that the government revoke all contracts for concessions granted contrary to the 1994 law, such as those of the French-based Coron and Thanry (*see* Part III – Company Profiles) which were granted by presidential decree, but little progress has been made.

The ministry responsible for the sector is the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, known as MINEF (Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts). The 1994 forestry law, essentially a framework for industrialisation, divides the forests into permanent and non-permanent forest areas. The permanent forest domain is formed by state forests and communal forests. The law sets out six different types of logging permits:⁷

Ventes de coupes (Sales of Standing Volume) are no longer issued and should not cover more than 2,500 hectares and last for a limited period of time (Section 55).

Permis d'exploitation (Exploitation permits) which are for the extraction of not more than 500 cubic metres of timber (Section 56).

Autorization personnelle de coupe (Individual Felling Authorisation) for the extraction of not more than 30 cubic metres of wood for non-commercial use (section 57).

Conventions d'exploitation (Concessions), which can include one or more *Unités forestières d'aménagement* (UFAs) or Forest Management Unit (FMUs). The Concession will be reviewed every three years and is for a specified volume of timber. (Section 46).

Exploitation en régie (State exploitation) via sale of standing volume or exploitation contract (Section 44).

Autorization de récupération (Wood recovery permit)

Récupération licences are not a normal logging permit but are used as such. *Récupérations* are usually issued only when a forest is going to be cleared for industrial purposes, such as the establishment of a palm plantation, where the trees would be destroyed anyway. Thus *récupération* permits do not require trees of a minimum diameter to be left nor a forest inventory. Unsurprisingly, they are open to wide abuse. Their potential may be a reason for their inappropriate allocation.

Of these six types of logging permits, concessions (UFAs) are the only ones that require management plans and which are allocated through a competitive bidding process. This process over-emphasises the price component of the bid compared to its technical quality: a 70/30 split in the weighting respectively. Industry representatives have complained that the process pushes them to put too high a price on the concessions they are bidding for; if they obtain the concession, they invariably feel under pressure to recover their costs more quickly than they otherwise would have to. Logging illegally is an easy route. Companies interested in sustainability are simply being driven out of business. Pressure by creditors to follow the due process and spirit of the law during the allocation of UFAs may be one of the driving forces behind the increasing area of forest being allocated instead as *vente de coupes* which do not require a management plan and in which logging can be subcontracted, possibly to the same companies logging the concessions (UFAs).

The total area of forest exploited as *ventes de coupe* has been increasing in recent years. Logging areas allocated under the *vente de coupe* system cannot legally exceed 2,500 hectares and/or a given volume of logs over one year; the permit can be renewed twice. In spite of these limitations, however, logging with a *vente de coupe* permit

Logs in the port of Douala, Cameroon



It seems to be common practice that, for every titre de récupération or vente de coupe, logging companies exploit more than five or six times the area legally allocated and enter other concessions (UFAs) in the process.

has advantages for those wishing to exploit the forest as much as possible. First, they do not require a management plan, as concessions (UFAs) do. Second, they are not reserved for Cameroonian nationals, as exploitation permits are. Third, they can be sub-contracted which, like the practice of *fermage* in Gabon (see page 46), diminishes responsibility and accountability for forest exploitation. It seems to be common practice that, for every *titre de récupération* or *vente de coupe*, logging companies exploit more than five or six times the area legally allocated and enter other concessions (UFAs) in the process. Companies are well aware of monitoring deficiencies. MINEF, the Cameroonian state agency in charge of monitoring compliance with the forestry legislation, says that it does not have the means to monitor the activities of the logging companies. Critics, however, say that it does not have the motivation.

Provision for a Community Forest Unit was made in the 1994 Forest Law, with the objective of giving greater self determination over the “development” process to communities than the industrial model of forest exploitation allows. The operations of the Unit within MINEF have been stifled, however, and for a long time the processing of applications for Community Forest Permits has been slow. In theory, the state should provide free technical advice for the establishment of community forests.⁸ In the meantime, areas of forest for which community applications were pending have been logged by large-scale operators, dashing any hopes of establishing small-scale operations. Even when established, Community Forests have been illegally logged by others.

Monitoring and enforcement of legislation is weak, with critics arguing that there is little political will at the top to tackle the high levels of illegal logging and trade that characterise the Cameroonian forestry sector; corruption within the sector greatly hinders implementation of the law. Whether through lack of funding or lack of will, resources are scarce. In the East Province, where logging companies based in Europe are dominant, there is on average one poorly-resourced government monitor for each 20,000 hectares of concession.

The job of the *Chef de Poste* is to monitor what is happening in the forest and report on any infractions of the law on a regular basis. These officials are given few resources to do their job, a motorbike perhaps but no fuel or support. Even if a *Chef de Poste* does provide reports on infractions, they are likely to hear nothing more of the outcome, even though the *Chef de Poste* is supposed to receive a proportion of the fines levied as a result of the infraction reports. There is therefore no motivation for the monitoring system to work at even ground level. Many of these infraction reports “disappear” within MINEF either in exchange for bribes paid to officials in the Ministry or higher, or the reports are held in a file by officials to extort money from companies that would otherwise be fined. The *Chef de Poste*, however, sees no return for doing his job and receives no signal of support from his colleagues. This leaves those who are keen to see improvement in forestry practices exposed in towns where the logging company may be the major employer, vulnerable to threats of violence or open to bribes given the absence of other sources of income.

MINEF has indicated that it is willing to take action against companies that operate illegally by, for instance, issuing fines and disqualifying them from participating in concession (UFA) licence auctions. These measures are, however, often ineffective or no more than token gestures: fines are relatively small and often the companies disqualified are not interested in bidding for any of the UFAs in that particular round of the auction process.

Illegality is one part of the lack of sustainability of the forestry sector. The 1994 law has resulted in the phasing out of log exports from 1999, in order to promote downstream processing within Cameroon and thus increase revenues to the country. This potentially positive move is undermined by two factors. Firstly, the most heavily exported species, Ayous, can still be exported in log form, albeit subject to higher rates of duty.⁹ Secondly, as a result of the legislation, companies have invested in downstream processing facilities but there are strong indications of over-capacity which is fuelling the demand for logs. Production levels are considerably higher than official estimates of sustainable harvest levels (see production and EU trade, below).¹⁰ This is increasing the pressure on the forest and there are clear indications that additional production is being derived in part from companies logging outside their legal concession areas. It has been predicted that logging at this rate means that the forests in Cameroon will run out of commercial timber within 15 years.

Building sustainable forest management capacity is not helped by the fact that the law forbids companies to conduct forest inventories themselves. Instead, they have to go through accredited companies (*société agréées*), such as National Office for the Development of Forests – Office National de Développement des Forêts (ONADEF), which is linked to MINEF civil servants. ONADEF has conducted socio-economic studies covering 30 villages in the Lomié area in just three days, including two days’ travelling time from Yaoundé and back. ONADEF has provided the official paperwork for 10 to 15 concessions (UFAs). The law and the operations of some accredited companies may be one of the main reasons why competent inventory/management planning in the private sector has not emerged. Logging companies are complicit in this: they accept the inventories and get their licences without apparently asking many questions or protesting about the system.

As well as operating their own concessions, European companies increasingly work as subcontractors to, or buy timber from, concessions allocated to Cameroonian nationals. In addition, a number of European companies no longer hold concessions themselves, partly as a result of the bidding process (*see* above) but they do have downstream processing facilities and act as sub-contractors to concession-holders. These companies still own the bulldozers and control the day-to-day operations of logging but it is not clear to what extent they are willing or able to put into practice sustainable forest management even if they would be prepared to do so in their own concessions.

Forestry taxes in Cameroon are generally low. The cutting tax (*taxe d'abatage*) is 2.5% of the value of production while the concession tax (*redevance de superficie*) is approximately 5-10% of the value of production. When logging an area of forest for the first time, a company may falsify its tax declarations to conceal illegal logging. The company, ETD, operating in UFA 10-047, for instance, logged an area of 12,300 hectares instead of the 2,500 hectares it was legally allowed. The total loss of tax revenue, based on area cut and estimated timber harvested, may be more than CFA Fr 2 billion (US\$ 2.6 million). Given the frequency of illegal logging, the forestry sector is not contributing as much as it should economically to the country.

Production and EU trade

The European timber trade and European consumers are currently major beneficiaries of illegal logging in Cameroon. Illegal logging and the processing and export of illegal logs involve major industrial operations moving hundreds of thousands of cubic metres of wood. In the major logging region of eastern Cameroon it has been suggested that as much as 50% of logs may be extracted illegally.¹¹

Many of the large processing plants show little concern for the source of the timber they are processing; in fact, the over-capacity of value-added processing in the country is likely to be driving illegal logging. Official government estimates suggest that sustainable log production levels are around 3.5 million cubic metres per annum,¹² although this figure is criticised as being an over-estimate given the scale of exploitation currently taking place. Actual log production is estimated to be between 4.5 million cubic metres and 5.1 million cubic metres.¹³

Much of Cameroon's timber production arrives on the shores of Europe. In 1998, the EU accounted for over 61% of log exports documented by the Swiss monitoring company SGS, with Italy and France being the two main destinations, receiving 230,687 cubic metres and 207,347 cubic metres of logs respectively.¹⁴ Although China was the primary destination for exports in 1997, it slipped to third place in 1998 (184,535 cubic metres), followed by Spain (152,276 cubic metres) and Portugal (146,845 cubic metres). Germany received 72,018 cubic metres, the Netherlands received 53,499 cubic metres and the UK received 52,700 cubic metres.¹⁵ Without a verifiable chain of custody no timber trader in Europe can declare with any certainty that the logs or timber in their yard from Cameroon are from legal sources. As a result, the environmental NGO Greenpeace have blockaded boats bringing timber of Cameroonian origin to Europe.¹⁶

International financial assistance

The EU and a number of member countries have programmes in Cameroon, ranging from field projects to implement conservation to sustainable development projects, from income stabilisation funds related to commodity prices to grant funding for specific projects. The EU forest conservation and sustainable development programme ECOFAC has a project in the Dja Reserve. There is also direct pressure from outside Cameroon to reform the forest sector through a programme of capacity-building within MINEF so that it can carry out its control function and through establishing an Independent Observer of the forestry sector to tackle corruption. This project could be a major step forward in increasing the transparency and accountability of the companies in the sector. The World Bank has threatened to stop funding Cameroon's large foreign debt unless the 1994 forestry law is respected.¹⁷

There are already some signs of change: the European Union has, through intense pressure, obliged President Biya to withdraw a dictat which overruled and prohibited the setting up within government of a Community Forestry Unit. Moreover, several senior officials in the Ministry of Forests have been replaced.¹⁸ Such moves, however, have been undermined by the allocation of other logging permits in areas of potential community forest in order to extract the timber before the local people have a chance at managing legally their own resources.

Environmental impacts

Unsustainable logging has meant that, as concessions become exhausted, companies are moving ever further into primary forest areas and logging operations have moved eastwards from the coast over time. To log only the best trees of a few high value species, companies

As well as operating their own concessions, European companies increasingly work as subcontractors to, or buy timber from, concessions allocated to Cameroonian nationals.



CFC's logging activities result in blocked rivers and the creation of stagnant pools of water which cannot be used for drinking and which are damaging for fish and plankton.

drive roads into large areas of previously inaccessible forest, thereby facilitating an influx of people seeking employment and opening the forest up to other activities such as commercial bushmeat hunting and agricultural encroachment. The logging industry has directly and indirectly facilitated a large increase in commercial bushmeat hunting, with wildlife being decimated in many areas. Logging activities threaten the Dja Reserve while concessions have been allocated inside the Campo Reserve (see Concessions map, page 34).

Social impacts

Provision of social services such as clinics and schools in logging concessions are not necessarily part of the formal logging agreement, although logging companies, in theory, pay a local tax which contributes towards development projects. It has been noted, however, that *“Money from the logging company rarely materialises in the locality where the logging operations are undertaken.”*¹⁹ Also, key individuals have been implicated in having appropriated “gifts” pledged to the village.²⁰ The lack of any real choice in their development options may be why, in reality, some forest-dependent people prefer illicit operations, in the hope that they will receive at least some cash directly as opposed to the royalties that are collected officially from companies logging legally and which are not likely to be distributed to those entitled to it.²¹ Fieldwork undertaken in April 2000 in the East Province revealed a number of local environmental and social impacts as a result of logging operations (see Box page 19).

The extent to which the cash economy has entered Cameroon's forests has been nigh on impossible for Pygmies to accommodate in their traditionally close-to-nature lives. They are often the ones who capture bushmeat on behalf of commercial traders who follow the logging roads and the ones who find commercially-exploitable trees

for loggers, thereby accelerating the end of their traditional way of life and the loss of a wealth of learning about forest products and nature.^{22, 23} Projects in regions where Pygmies remain semi-nomadic, such as the French government-sponsored API forestry project at Dimako, set out to sedentarise Pygmy groups.²⁴

Intimidation of local people, NGOs and government officials by company employees can be severe if operations are questioned. Also, logging companies, sensitive to criticism and usually the dominant employer in many towns, are well placed to encourage the transmission of information about, for example, newly-arrived strangers and the movement of individuals concerned with forest law enforcement. This includes the intimidation of local and international NGOs and other community groups.

Companies logging the forests of Cameroon

European companies have dominated the forest industry in Cameroon since the industry came into being several decades ago. The situation remains largely unchanged with a few notable exceptions, such as the reported sale of the Thanry interests (see Part III – Company Profiles) to a China-based group, Vicwood International, the operations of SFH and the brief operations of Rimbunan Hijau, a Malaysian-based company, in the late 1990s. Many of the UFAs, other logging operations, processing facilities and transport infrastructure are owned by European-based companies. The products of the industry also largely end up in Europe.

Even when concessions are owned by Cameroonian nationals, European-based companies are frequently contracted to undertake the actual extraction of the timber from the forest. The same contracting company will also be likely to buy the timber for processing or export.

See Map page 34 and Appendix for further details of concession ownership in Cameroon.

Summary of an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment of CFC operations, April 2000

by Sandrine Lapuyadeⁱ

The Cameroon Forestry Company (CFC) is a subsidiary of the Thanry France group. CFC was established in 1990 and operates in Cameroon's Eastern Province. Over the last five years, CFC has received numerous favours from the government in contravention of existing laws.

The granting of logging permits and the overriding of agreed regulations

The forestry permits which the CFC has profited from have been granted without the agreed regulations, as laid down in law, being followed. For example, four short-term logging permits were granted without the advice of a competent technical committee being sought. Similarly the allotted concession (UFA) permits 10-001, 10-002, 10-003 and 10-004 in the Yokadouma arrondissement were granted in 1996, in a decree actually signed by the President, without these having been put out to tender.

This latter concession, granted for 15 years, has the CFC operating within the framework of a final agreement, as opposed to a temporary agreement as is laid down in law and as is understood in several public administration practices. Under this final agreement, the company should have drawn up an inventory, a development plan and a five-year management plan within six months of signing the agreement. The management plan was not produced until 1999, and four years after the granting of the concession, the company has still not produced its five-year plan. In addition to this reprehensible behaviour, we may add the delay in the implementation of participative management measures: the company has never drawn up nor supplied to the government the technical information necessary to negotiate the boundaries of the allotted concession and the usage rights with the local population or the implementation of its social programme, the latter of which should be included in the conditions of the agreement.

The guide drawn up by the forestry authorities has also not been followed on several points:

- § the boundaries of the UFAs and the annual sub-division of the logging concessions are disregarded;
- § the minimum tree diameters for logging appear to have been completely ignored;
- § the sub-division of concession no. 6 in UFA 10-001, which was never authorised as a concession by the government, has been exploited illegally.

These practices demonstrate CFC's lack of consideration towards the environmental and economic sustainability of its activities. CFC has never been fined for logging outside the boundaries of concession sub-divisions, although this represents a considerable loss of earnings to the national treasury. Sanctions on CFC should be proportional to the turnover generated by this illegal logging, estimated at more than \$US 4 million from 2,500 ha.

Built without the advice of an expert, the well water is very cloudy and unfit for consumption

While recognising these practices to be illegal, CFC's management says it is obliged to operate this way as it waits for its management plan to be approved. There seems little foundation to this argument since the company has received at least one sub-division of a logging concession each year. This includes, since the production of the management plan, the sub-division of logging concession No. 10 in UFA 10-001 for 1999/2000. The ambiguous status of the CFC's concession allows the company to not only continue with activities that are not compliant with existing law but also to possibly benefit from a final agreement of 18 years.

Finally, the total area to be granted to a concession-holder should not exceed 200,000 ha. However, the area of the CFC's four UFAs amounts to 215,680 ha. Furthermore, the Thanry France group



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ⁱ The E&SIA was undertaken by Sandrine Lapuyade, Louis Djomo, Honoré Ndoumbe Nkotto, Théophile Ndjodo and Pierre Titi Nwel. The full version of the report is available at www.forestsmonitor.org



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The clinic at Ngolla

exploits almost 500,000 ha. in Cameroon. While it has no legal basis in Cameroon, it has obtained access to far more land for logging than that laid down by the law in Cameroon, due to the creation of numerous subsidiaries.

Workers' conditions

The camp set up by CFC for its workers does not meet several required legal standards.

Camp accommodation has neither a kitchen nor a bathroom. There is neither clean water for washing in nor drinking water. The company has sunk a well near the camp; this constitutes the sole source of water for the camp. Built without the advice of an expert, the well water is very cloudy and unfit for consumption; it is also less than appealing to wash in. Furthermore, the water contains a number of amoeba, which cause the workers and their families to suffer from serious dysentery problems.

In the sawmill, the workers have neither gloves nor masks. They use chainsaws without wearing protective trousers or shoes, and few workers have protective earphones or safety glasses. Moreover, the workers' only entrance to the camp is behind the sawmill, just a few metres from where the logs are handled prior to being cut up. This ignores the most basic rules of health and safety.

CFC has not built a school or a health centre for its workers. Consequently there is no local school for the workers' children and health care is only available at Ngolla - which is at best rudimentary. Moreover, it is the company that decides if an accident on site is work-related. Workers then often see the cost of their care deducted from their wages.

Environmental impact

Given the variety of species and the level of the vegetation's natural regeneration in this area, with its rainy climate and mineral-rich soil, industrial-scale exploitation of the forests has above all an impact on the quality of the flora. The land cleared for the logging sites is quickly taken over by secondary forest to the detriment of primary forest while the five tree species that are sought after become less abundant in adult trees.

More than 76 per cent of the trees logged by CFC are threatened species. The Sapelli and Sipo, which are classified as 'vulnerable', are likely to become extinct in the medium term. The Assamela is classified as 'endangered', with a likelihood of extinction in the short term. By felling the largest trees, the forestry industry removes those trees that produce the best seeds. These tree species thus suffer from a

lowering of their genetic base and this affects their regeneration.

The damage to biodiversity can also be seen on the fauna. Hunters also use the tracks constructed by the company to reach different parts of the forest and this leads to intensive hunting which is decimating animal species. In addition, the noise of the forestry machinery has caused most primates and Suidae to flee. The building of the roads and forestry tracks limits the movements of buffalo and elephants thus leaving them at the mercy of poachers. Birds are becoming more and more scarce. Generally the only animals to remain are small animals, particularly rodents.

Numerous shortcomings have been observed regarding the environmental impact of CFC's activities:

- § a lack of planning regarding the location of trees to be felled and the placement of forestry tracks;
- § poor directions and information regarding felling and forwarding areas;
- § large clearings for the main roads (of 25-35 m) and for the secondary roads (of 18-23 m);
- § strong inclines (est. at 15 per cent minimum) at frequent intervals on the roads and tracks inside the concession area;

§ the use of construction methods for bridge-building in the forests which constrict the flow of the rivers and sometimes block the river altogether.

The shortcomings have the effect of:

- § forestry workers not being able to locate all the logs, so some are abandoned in the forests;
- § a growing number of tracks and an exacerbation of the problem of the soil being compacted, along with a destruction of the undergrowth;
- § more and more forestry work sites, most of which are 100-150 m apart;
- § a low yield on the forest of 10-12 m³/ha.;
- § a high level of erosion, bringing more and more silt to the rivers. By stopping the light penetrating, this sediment is affecting the fish and aquatic plants;
- § blocking the rivers and creating stagnant pools of water which cannot be used for drinking water and which are damaging for fish and plankton.

In addition, around CFC's base area, areas of forest have been burnt in preparation for agriculture. The amount of forest taken over for subsistence agriculture by the CFC's workers will increase with the rise in the number of employees. This matter is all the more worrying because the concession is in permanent forestry land where the land is intended for no other use but forestry.

Economic fallout

A total of 230 jobs have been created, of which 74 are for the people from the villages neighbouring the concession. The creation of these jobs appears to be the only positive impact of the CFC's presence. The appeal of these jobs is such that the disappointment is great to see that many positions are filled by people from outside the area, who are often better qualified, and that the proportion of 'local' people employed is low.

The wages are not high but the creation of 230 jobs in the area generates a sizeable supply of money which could contribute towards local development. However, the fact that CFC has based itself 20 km from the closest village limits the growth of commercial activities in the neighbouring areas, and no new development or business has been seen in the villages visited.

There are few opportunities for selling goods along the road. Foodstuffs such as plantains can take days to be sold on the roadside. Those living in the CFC camp prefer to buy from Yokadouma where produce is cheaper. To improve the marketing and sales of their produce, the villagers of Ngolla have asked CFC to help

them set up a local market which the workers could visit. However, there has been no development on this.

Impact on non-timber forest products

The CFC concession is in a part of the forest where the Sapelli tree is abundant. This species is the most sought after by the company but Sapelli leaves are also the favourite food of a caterpillar locally called 'ossié'. These caterpillars are becoming scarcer and scarcer. Collected in August – September, they can generate an annual turnover of CFA 10,000. This means that these caterpillars, in addition to their nutritional value, can represent a sizeable revenue. The Sapelli bark is also used to heal wounds, for stomach-aches and for intestinal problems.

The sawmill site used to be an important area for wild mangoes (*irvingia gabonensis*) and the neighbouring villagers say that they now have to go much further to find wild mangoes. The fruit from this tree is important due to its nutritional and commercial value. The paste made from the kernel is particularly useful because it can be used to make sauces which last for a long time. Once made into 'cakes' the actual kernels can be conserved for over a year. In addition, studies looking at non-timber products have shown the commercial value of these mangoes. Harvesting wild mangoes is easily the most profitable activity among the non-timber activities, and if all the fruits of a tree were sold, this would make approximately CFA 100,000 - 150,000 a year.

The drop in fish catches is another major concern for the riverside villagers. The women have noticed a real drop in the catch and they have to travel further in order to catch sufficient quantities. In some villages, they are travelling 20 km just to get a reasonable number of fish. The people of Ngolla 35 used to fish in the Mempoé river which runs behind the CFC sawmill. Now they have to go to swamps far away to find the best sources for the fish. However, given the already noticeable encroachment by the company into these areas, some of the women think there will soon be no more fish left. This is causing the women a lot of worry and they can see no solution to this problem.

Since CFC started its operations, animals have been displaced and this has affected the villagers. In addition there have been changes to their hunting routes which cut across the forestry routes. This means that the hunters have to travel long distances to catch sufficient quantities or they have to go to 'professional' hunters, whom they have to

pay. The difficulty in finding game animals has a real economic impact in the area. Due to the decline of the cash crops sector, hunting has become the most profitable economic activity. In addition, game – which is cheaper than farmed animals – is the main source of animal-based protein. The need to buy an increasing amount of meat is affecting the household budget and people's nutritional levels. The Baka pygmies often suffer from a lack of sufficient protein during the dry season and the exploitation of the forest is exacerbating this problem. When demand is strong, the high prices paid in the local markets often encourage the hunters to sell the game rather than eat it or sell it at a (cheaper) village-rate.

There are poachers in the workers' camp and this is an important factor in the declining numbers of game animals. Professional poachers, or youths with nothing to do, supply the workers and their families with game meat, as there is no alternative supply of meat. When the poachers cannot find a buyer locally, they sell in the town where the prices are higher. There are also outside forces involved, often powerful figures who own the guns and who have a crucial role in the growth of poaching.

Exacerbation of economic and social inequalities

The increase in goods and money coming into the region is causing a monetarization of the economy. This sometimes leads 'to going without in order to buy salt, soap and other things'. This contributes to the economic and social marginalization of people who do not have access to cash. This is particularly the case for women and the Baka people.

One of the few ways to earn money for Baka women is to work on the Bantu plantations. However, they are often paid in kind, so their income is small. Bantu women often have easier access to cash than Baka women do, yet the range of sources of income available is greater among men than women. Non-timber based forestry products play an important role in women's ability to earn a cash income. Therefore women are particularly badly hit when these products' quality and quantity is reduced. Moreover, when the supply of meat diminishes, the job of finding a substitute for mealtimes falls on the women, who see the number of things they have to do rising. Also the distances which they have to cover to find fruit and fish takes time which they need for other tasks and for earning money. Prostitution is one way for women to earn an income and some women from the

villages around the CFC's concession seem to engage in prostitution. This is the case for the Bantu women, but also for the Baka women who are in demand due to the low prices which they charge.

Women and the Baka are least involved in decision-making. They are the last to receive any of the rare benefits in kind provided by the company: compensation for the felling of a tree on private land used by a woman is paid to a man, who alone has the right of land ownership; the clearing of an area for a food market benefits the influential men; many women are neither knowledgeable about the workings of CFC, nor of the existence of the Management Committees, nor of the dues paid by the company. Some villagers have never heard of the Management Committees and have no knowledge of what is being done with the money from these dues. The arbitrary selection of members for the two Management Committees, made by local authorities at the expense of the chiefs' authority, leads to the control of the benefits by just a handful of people.

Health

The company's lack of commitment to ensuring the well-being of its workers and their families has led to the following major problems:

- § permanent cases of amoebiasis, due to the total lack of drinking water for its employees;

- § frequent accidents at work;
- § a proliferation of sexually transmissible diseases, primarily due to the growth in prostitution, a lack of preventative measures and a lack of information on the subject;
- § large numbers of colds, due to pollution with the air containing particulates from wood-treatment operations and from the near-permanent emission from particulates from the production line;
- § hernias due to people carrying heavy loads.

Outside the camp, there are numerous cases of malaria. It is well known that deforestation plays a role in the development of this disease. In addition the swirling up of dust on the roads by forestry vehicles increases the risk of transmission of contagious diseases, because dust is a remarkable carrier of germs. CFC is not the only company operating in the region but its operations can only accentuate these problems.

Conclusion

In spite of the current and foreseeable consequences of its activities on the human and natural environment and on the problems that these bring for the local inhabitants, CFC has undertaken only a limited number of schemes aimed at developing community facilities, and has only organised one meeting with just one

group of neighbouring villagers. The Forestry Law of 1994 aims to integrate the needs of the local populations but the necessary means to enforce it are not available. The concerns of the people are often disregarded because the economic and financial imperatives within which the activities of forestry companies are based are far removed from these considerations, though those are crucial on economic but also ethical grounds. The interaction between those exploiting the forests, the villagers and the different local actors are complex and difficult to deal with. Nevertheless the Thanry group has operated in Cameroon for many years and it should, as a result, have acquired experience of dealing with social problems and experience of working with neighbouring villagers. It should develop an effective and fair means of communication and negotiation with the local populations instead of giving out sporadic gifts of foodstuffs, wood and alcohol. A well managed process of negotiation regarding the promotion of local development and a policy of adequate training would not overcome all of the problems or the impact of the exploitation of the forest on the peoples' wellbeing. However, it could offer some compensation. Obviously the Thanry group has chosen a different path and profits from the weakness of the Cameroonian authorities in enforcing the law to grow rich at the expense of the less powerful.

Mountain of sawdust from the CFC mill in the concession



Central African Republic

Political, social and economic framework

THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR) is a landlocked country in the centre of the African continent. Its population of 3.4 million is spread over 623,000 square kilometres, 70% of which live in remote and isolated areas. With a per capita GNP of US\$ 320 and life expectancy of 49 years,¹ CAR is one of the poorest countries in the region. Only the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has a lower per capita GNP but, in spite of being a country at war, its inhabitants can expect to live a few years longer on average than their counterparts in CAR.

CAR gained independence from France in 1960, but the country's first multi-party elections did not take place until 1993, over 30 years later. In the meantime, dictators ruled, including one of the cruellest of the continent, Colonel Jean-Bedel Bokassa, who was in power from 1966 to 1979. Democratic elections, however, have not ensured political stability. In 1996, three military-led mutinies caused widespread damage in the capital, Bangui. In spite of mediation by other countries, the United Nations and the establishment in 1997 of the Bangui Accords between the CAR government and the mutineers,² political instability continued. The UN peacekeeping forces, which entered the country in April 1998, were withdrawn in February 2000. According to the CAR government, "peace ... remains fragile, poverty is widespread and basic social services have steadily deteriorated".³

The government is trying to meet the conditions for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC), but it is not certain that they will qualify, despite a total debt stock of US\$ 928 million and a debt-to-exports ratio of 455%.⁴ Subsistence agriculture is the backbone of the country's economy. Diamonds are the primary source of export revenue, but they are regularly smuggled out of the country, depriving the government of tax revenues.⁵ Timber is the second most important source of export revenue and seems likely to become more significant. Even though CAR's economy deteriorated in 2000, partly as a result of disrupted oil imports because of the war in neighbouring DRC, timber exports increased, and the government is forecasting yet more growth in 2001.⁶ The forestry sector is the top private employer in the country, having 3,500 people on its payroll in 1999.⁷ Timber exports, however, do not appear to have contributed to higher living standards and forestry companies operating in the country have a record of undermining traditional social structures in the areas where they operate.

Forest policy and practice

Compared to the other countries in the Congo region, CAR has a relatively small area of forest – around five million hectares – corresponding to 8% of the country's territory.⁸ Yet in terms of commercially valuable species, such as Sapelli, Ayous and Sipo, its forests are some of the richest in Africa.⁹ Moreover, from an ecological perspective, they represent a crossroads where the bio-geographic areas of Central Africa meet.¹⁰

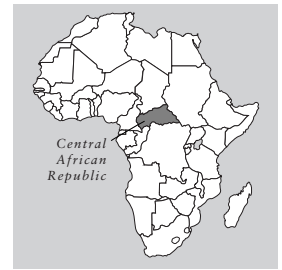
The timber industry in CAR is the smallest, by volume, in the Congo Basin but still accounts for 16% of the country's export earnings. The export of timber is hampered by transport, CAR being landlocked, which often adds 60% to the costs of production.¹¹ Timber is either sent by river and rail via Brazzaville to Pointe Noire in neighbouring Congo (Brazzaville), or by road to Douala in Cameroon. The Cameroonian route accounts for most traffic today because of railway difficulties in Congo (Brazzaville).

The country's forests grow in two distinct areas:¹²

- § In the south-west, in the regions of Sangha and Lobaye, forests cover an area of 3.7 million hectares.¹³ Most logging concessions are located in this area, especially along the borders with Cameroon and Congo. This area is also where most of the diamond mining takes place;
- § In the east, in the Bangassou area, forests cover an estimated 1.2 million hectares. This region is very isolated, and little is known about its forests. They are not being exploited commercially because of transport difficulties.

Forest concessions and other forestry matters are governed by the Forestry Code of 9 June 1990¹⁴ and by some articles of the 1995 Finance Law.¹⁵ Despite some good provisions, the ministry responsible for forests, the Ministère de l'Environnement, des Eaux, Forêts, Chasses et Pêches, lacks the resources to monitor and enforce legislation properly and planning is weak. The roles and rights of private enterprises and local communities are poorly defined.¹⁶

According to 1997 Ministry data, 2.5 million hectares of the forests in the south-west were allocated to nine industrial permit holders, covering 68% of the forests of the Sangha and Lobaye regions (see map, p.36).¹⁷ Data from the Ministry obtained in the year 2000 indicate



According to the CAR government, "peace ... remains fragile, poverty is widespread and basic social services have steadily deteriorated".



The ministry responsible for forests lacks the resources to monitor and enforce legislation properly and planning is weak. The roles and rights of private enterprises and local communities are poorly defined.

that the total area under concession in the south-west has now risen to 3.2 million hectares, or 86% of the region.¹⁸

Concessions are not granted for a specific number of years but for unlimited duration. Although companies do not own the areas they log, their lifelong rights allow them to obtain bank credit and to receive compensation if their rights are cancelled without reason.¹⁹

Efforts to ensure that logs are mainly processed in the country have been intensified over the last few years. The 1990 Forestry Code established that companies must implement a wood-processing unit and process 60% or more of their production from their third year onwards.²⁰ The 1995 Finance Law, however, established that logging companies had to transform at least 85% of the logs into timber within CAR. A 1996 Finance Law goes further, prohibiting exports of raw logs unless companies comply with several requirements, such as making investments in the country of US\$4 million in two years and contributing to social initiatives.²¹ There are also tax incentives to process timber in the country: log exports are taxed at 20% but processed timber exports at 10%.²² Despite the legislation, however, log exports continue to dominate the sector.

The government has stepped up measures to curb mislabelling of wood (from threatened species) and excessive cutting.²³ But it appears unable to make more than a token gesture because of a lack of financial and human resources, although the recent appointment of the Swiss-based monitoring company SGS to monitor exports may help. Increased revenues from export taxation are expected to pay for the hiring of this private company.²⁴

Production and EU trade

Total log production in CAR has increased significantly during the 1990s and is set to continue rising in line with structural adjustment policies. In 1993, total log production was 167,700 cubic metres and in 1999 it reached 552,800 cubic metres. The majority of exports still consist of logs rather than processed timber. In 1993, 43,400 cubic metres of logs and 33,800 cubic metres of sawn wood were exported. In 1999, 153,700 cubic metres of logs and 64,000 cubic metres of sawn wood were exported, a rise of 31% and a drop of 11% respectively on 1998 figures.²⁵ Most of the wood exported comes to the EU.²⁶ Export and import statistics, however, vary according to different sources, and this can be an indication of illegal trading in timber.²⁷

International financial assistance

There are serious concerns about the misuse of international financial assistance in the country. In May 2000, an article in the CAR press suggested that providing aid to the government was a crime against the CAR people. The author was later arrested and charged with “insulting the head of the state”, provoking a strong reaction from two worldwide press associations.²⁸

France is the largest bilateral donor to CAR; it pays the greater part of the government expenses, including civil service salaries.²⁹ The second largest donor is Japan, whose official assistance to the CAR averaged US\$ 20 million during the period 1996 to 1998.³⁰

In the 1980s, the French government, via the African Development Bank, funded the construction of a road by French contractors in the south-western part of the country,³¹ which facilitated the entry of logging companies, poachers and bushmeat hunters into the forest. After the road’s completion in June 1989, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was conducted on its potential extension to the capital, Bangui. It concluded that the road might as well be extended because “the damage had already been done”.³²

The EU forest conservation and sustainable development programme, ECOFAC, has a project in the south-west forest of Ngotto. Covering 825,000 hectares, this forest harbours over 115 mammal species and over 320 bird species. ECOFAC support in CAR includes a pilot sustainable forest management project in cooperation with a private logging company, IFB (Industrielle Forestière de Batalimo), which was granted two concessions known as Permis d’Exploitation et d’Aménagement (PEA), one in 1994 and the other in 1996. According to a 1999 ECOFAC assessment of the partnership, the company has complied with all the national rules governing sustainable forestry in the area.³³

Environmental impacts

Because of transportation difficulties and substantial costs, logging in CAR is highly selective. Only the most valuable trees are sought. But this selective targeting leads to large areas of forest being opened up as companies go deeper into the forest in search of the best timber. Sapelli, Ayous and Sipo are the main species logged but, because of the damage caused to surrounding trees, some estimates suggest that selective logging in fact damages as much as 30% of the forest in CAR.³⁴ Once loggers leave the area, poachers and settlers come in on the roads built by logging companies. In the western area of the country, most roads have been built by loggers to serve their interests rather than those of the local people. Roads between CAR and Cameroon, for example, run near concessions held by the company Thanry in both countries.³⁵ Poaching has had a considerable impact on the fauna of CAR. In the Lobaye region where logging and mining are concentrated, little wildlife is left, especially along the Berberati/Bayanga road.³⁶

Social impacts

Logging companies come and go but their social impacts are not so transient. Information about the social consequences of logging in the area around Bayanga in the south west of CAR is typical.³⁷

Most people working for the logging companies which operate around Bayanga come originally from outside the area, including the Savannah region in the north and from neighbouring Congo (Brazzaville). The majority stay in the area even in the months or years when one company has stopped logging but another has not yet taken over the concession. Many work in the diamond mines during these periods or go hunting.³⁸

Logging employs just some of those who have immigrated into the area and has given them work for only three years in the last 10 when the concession was functioning. During the years when the logging concession was not worked, diamond mining and agriculture increased, as did competition for resources, for example, fish in the streams. This has heightened stress and led to conflict between groups of people. The Bayaka Pygmies are often particularly adversely affected.³⁹

To work in logging, people live in much larger villages, although many of them, including the Bayaka, are not used to living together in such large numbers. The result has been a marked rise in health and social problems related to a lack of sanitation, infectious diseases, alcoholism and a lack of social cohesion. Alcohol is more readily available in the villages than in the smaller Bayaka hunting camps. The Bayaka have become more indebted to the villagers, although in the larger villages the Bayaka have more choice with whom to trade. Larger villages have also led to a rise in literacy and some health care since schools and clinics are more available.⁴⁰ Access to health care and education, however, is not always equitable between groups.

Roads have allowed those who do not know the forest to go into it. They have taken to killing and selling bushmeat; as a result, there are fewer game animals in the forest, particularly fewer duikers (a kind of deer) and monkeys. This in turn has led to conflict within

Bayaka Pygmy communities and conflict between Bayaka and incomers. Incoming trappers accuse the Bayaka who live in hunting camps of stealing animals from their snares – the Bayaka usually hunt with nets – accusations that have led to the Bayaka being jailed, beaten or killed.⁴¹ Logging also destroys the Sapelli and Ayous trees where kinin caterpillars live, an important food source for local people.⁴² The Bayaka are losing many of their forest skills, including traditional hunting techniques that require time and commitment to master; training opportunities in such skills are also being lost.⁴³

Companies logging the forests of the Central African Republic

European companies and capital have dominated the forestry sector in CAR. The recent arrival of WTK of Malaysia has marked a change from this pattern, although SESAM, the company WTK acquired in the late 1990s, retains some French capital. Concessionaires have changed since 1997, when the map (*see* page 36) and accompanying concession data (*see* Appendix) was produced, and the area under concession has increased. Table 3 shows the most recent data available on concessionaires.

Table 3: Concession holders in CAR at end of 1999

Company	Source of Finance	Area of Operation	Size of Concession (hectares)	Date Concession Allocated
IFB (Industrie Forestiere de Batalimo)	French	Batalimo (Lobaye) Sciere	119,000	24th August 1994
IFB (Industrie Forestiere de Batalimo)	French	Ngotto (Lobaye)	148,000	7th March 1996
SCAD (Société Centrafricaine de Deroulage)	Syrian-CAR	Loko (Sc. + Deroul.) Lobaye / Dolobo (Sciere) Lobaye	296,306	7th March 1996
SESAM (Société d'Exploitation de la Sangha-Mbaere)	Malaysian (major) and French	Salo (Sangha-Mbaere) Sciere	106,700	21st July 1991
SESAM (Société d'Exploitation de la Sangha-Mbaere)	Malaysian (major) and French	Nola (Sangha-Mbaere) Sciere	306,600	2nd November 1995
SEFCA (Société d'Exploitation Forestiere Centrafricaine)	Lebanese	Mbaere 1 (Sciplac) Sciere Mambele (Sangha-Mbaere) Sciere	381,026	17th July 1998
Thanry Centrafrique	French	Bamban Sciere hautement mecanisee	228,000	29th May 1996
Colombe Foret Société Nouvelle	Lebanese with CAR president	Mambere-Kadei Sangha-Mambere	652,221	7th July 1998
SOFOKAD (Soc. Forest. de la Kadei)	French – CAR	Sosso Nakombo	131,200	15th January 1999
Ndonga Meubles	CAR	Bouaca (Ombella-Mpoko) Sciere Mobile	127,013	26th June 1996
SBB (Soc. Des Bois de Bayanga)	French	Bayanga	307,600	19th April 1999
SEPFIC (Soc. d'Exploit. Et de Promot. Des Forets Centraf.)	CAR	Nola	275,000	5th June 1999
PTC (Pan Africa Trading Centrafrique)	-	Mambere-Kadei	100,000	19th October 1999
TOTAL			3,178,666	

Source: Ministère de l'Environnement, des Eaux, Forêts, Chasses et Pêches, Fiche Signalétique des Sociétés Forestières en Centrafrique

Congo (Brazzaville)

Political, social and economic framework

THE REPUBLIC OF CONGO is often referred to as Congo (Brazzaville) in order to avoid confusion with neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly Zaire (*see* page 32). The country has a small stretch of coast on the Atlantic Ocean between Gabon and Angola; its inland borders are with Cameroon to the north, the Central African Republic to the north-east and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the south-east. The country has a total area of 342,000 square kilometres, 60% of which is covered by rainforests.¹ Over half the 2.7 million inhabitants of Congo (Brazzaville) live in the cities in the south of the country.² GNP per capita in 1997 was US\$ 660 and life expectancy was 51 years.³ Most of the rainforests are in the sparsely-populated and remote north of the country (which represents 57% of Congo's territory but has just 230,500 inhabitants).⁴ For much of the rural population here, the forest and its resources are their main source of livelihood.

Congo (Brazzaville) gained independence from France in 1960; it has had a turbulent history both before and after independence. Between 1958 and 1979, there were three presidential coups and one presidential assassination. Military rule was established in 1968. Colonel Denis Sassou Nguesso assumed power in 1979 and ruled as a dictator until 1992, when President Lissouba was elected. Since then, violence and civil war have erupted periodically between various government and militia forces loyal either to Lissouba, Sassou Nguesso or a former prime minister, Kolelas. During a savage five-month civil war in 1997, thousands of unarmed civilians were killed and 700,000 displaced (over one-quarter of the population), as they fled into the countryside or to neighbouring countries. Grave human rights abuses against the civilian population were perpetrated by all sides in the conflict. Sassou Nguesso seized power again in October 1997. A new civil war broke out at the end of 1998. Despite two ceasefires signed in 1999, violence continued at the end of 1999. Internally displaced people returning to their homes in 1999 faced serious human rights abuses, including killings, disappearances, and rape.⁵ A fragile peace was restored in 2000.

Congo (Brazzaville) faces the enormous task of restoring the population's hope in the future following the traumatic events that people have endured in recent years, as well as physically rebuilding the country. Demobilising and disarming former militia members, many of whom were responsible for human rights abuses, is critical to ensuring a lasting peace, and includes the daunting challenge of reconciliation. Establishing a government based on democratic and inclusive principles will be essential for laying the foundations for sustainable development that benefits all of the people. As a start, presidential, legislative and local elections are scheduled for 2001.

As well as the political challenges ahead, the country also faces the escalating monetary costs of resettling displaced persons and rebuilding infrastructure and institutions. For example, the railway from Brazzaville to the port of Pointe Noire is of immense importance to the country's economy and was a strategic target during the civil war, suffering damage which resulted in the line's closure for a considerable period. It is likely to be some time before it is fully operational again.

Although Congo (Brazzaville) was the fourth largest oil producer in sub-Saharan Africa in 1999,⁶ the country remains highly indebted to international financial institutions and debt arrears continue to escalate. At the end of 1999, its total external debt amounted to CFA Fr 3,357 billion (US\$ 4.36 billion), equivalent to 246% of its GDP, with arrears of CFA Fr 1,279 billion (US\$ 1.66 billion).⁷ The country does not as yet qualify for debt relief under the HIPC initiative, although international donors met in October 2000 to discuss the situation. They indicated that, if the country follows stringent macro-economic policies, including privatisation, developing the non-oil sectors and fiscal management, as well as commencing work on a Poverty Reduction Strategy, this would take the country one step nearer to qualification for debt relief (*see* page 9 for more on HIPC).⁸ As part of structural adjustment policies, multilateral creditors are encouraging the development of the non-oil sectors of the economy, including forestry, and the privatisation of state-controlled institutions, including former forest parastatals. Timber exports represent the country's second major source of export revenues after oil and the forestry sector provides 10% of formal employment.⁹ Forestry's contribution to GNP increased from 1% in 1982 to 5% in 1996.¹⁰

Forest policy and practice

Of the 21.5 million hectares of the country's forests, approximately half of them (12.7 million hectares) are classified as productive forest suitable for timber exploitation.¹¹ The rest are flooded or semi-flooded forests or are located in irregular terrain not amenable to commercial



As part of structural adjustment policies, multilateral creditors are encouraging the development of the non-oil sectors of the economy, including forestry.



Because of disruptions to the railway as a result of the civil wars, logs from northern Congo have been leaving the country on this road via Cameroon.

exploitation.¹² In 1995, 37% of the total forest area of Congo was held in concessions and this has increased rapidly since 1996.

There are two main areas of commercially exploitable natural forests in Congo:¹³

§ In the south, in the regions of Kouilou-Mayombe and Chaillu-Niari, forests cover 4.5 million hectares of which just over 4 million hectares were held as concessions in 1995.¹⁴ Forests in these regions are relatively accessible and have been intensively exploited since the 1940s.¹⁵ In 1990, over 50% of the country's total production came from here.¹⁶ The two main tree species targeted are Okoumé and Limba. Logging operations in the south virtually ceased because of the civil war;

§ In the north, forests cover 17.3 million hectares,¹⁷ of which 8.9 million are deemed

exploitable.¹⁸ Prior to 1996, concessions had been allocated for 2.1 million hectares of northern forests and forestry activities were limited because of the relative isolation of the region; this has been changing rapidly. In 1996 alone, 3.2 million hectares were allocated for timber exploitation¹⁹ and, since 1998, President Sassou Nguesso has been actively seeking multinational logging companies to take over the exploitation of the remaining unallocated forests in the north of the country. Many of the previously unallocated concessions have now been allocated and former parastatals have been privatised. As a result, the northern forests are becoming increasingly significant for timber production. The two main tree species targeted are Sapelli and Sipo.

The state department responsible for the forestry sector is the Ministry of Forest Economy (*Ministère de l'Economie Forestière*). The forestry industry was until recently legally governed by the 1974 Forestry Code. Its revision by Parliament began in 1993, which produced a draft revised version in June 1998 (*see below*). The 1974 law specified that the forest be divided into management units (*unités d'aménagement*), each of which must have a precise plan of management and exploitation.²⁰ Stipulations regarding harvesting and development practices were set out, as well as how much concessionaires could produce per year (*VMA – volume maximum annuel*). Of the 27 management units that existed in 1990, only five had a management plan but none observed it.²¹ In northern Congo none of the active forestry units have a management plan, although some companies are now developing them.

The June 1998 version of the Forestry Code includes the following objectives:²²

- § Sustainable management of forests;
- § Conservation of biological diversity;
- § Reforestation, mainly through communal and industrial plantations;
- § Decentralisation of the sector and international co-operation;
- § Development and diversification of industries based on the local transformation of almost all log production. To attain this objective, the new code establishes that, whereas the maximum period of production concession is for 10 years, permits for the processing industry can last up to 15 years and can be renewed.

In January 1998, President Sassou Nguesso announced that logging companies were forbidden to export logs²³ and that all companies had to present a plan for timber processing.²⁴ In March 2000, however, the Congolese government finally approved the law, and it stated that 60% of timber production must be processed locally.²⁵ Although the increased emphasis on downstream processing should bring additional revenues to the government, the implementation of this policy will not be immediate given that processing facilities have been little developed in the country to date; in 1997, the country had 30 processing units but only five had export capacity. Most exports are still of logs.

The government often lacks the capacity to develop social infrastructure, particularly in the north. As a result, social development projects are often specified as part of the contract between government and forestry companies and are known as the *cahier des charges*. Projects include the construction of roads, schools and clinics. In some instances, these projects are undertaken in lieu of taxes or by the company under contract to the government, and are therefore at the government's, and not the company's, expense.

Congo (Brazzaville)'s forestry taxes are considered to be low and substantial revenues have been lost because of irregularities; the government itself estimates that US\$ 4 billion in timber industry levies have been foregone as a result.²⁶ Logging companies still have considerable room for negotiation about timber volumes and taxes. This has facilitated corruption in the

awarding and exploitation of generous concessions.²⁷ Tax incentives are favouring the development of forestry operations in the north of the country. In 1999, one French company, Rougier, was granted a 370,000 hectare concession near the border with the Central African Republic (CAR), reportedly on terms so generous that it could expect to recover its capital investment in just two years and would pay just one-third of the normal royalties to the government.²⁸

The costs of the war are being felt by forestry companies in a number of ways: the disruption to transport routes, especially the railway, have added considerably to transport costs from the north; the cessation of operations in the south of the country; the kidnapping of staff (*see* Wonnemann, page 66); forestry companies are now being asked by the government to employ former militia members to help reintegrate them into society, even though they are unqualified.²⁹

Because of disruptions to the railway as a result of the civil wars, logs from northern Congo have been leaving the country by road via Cameroon to Douala rather than being floated down river to the main river port in Brazzaville, where authorities control and tax timber traffic, and then on by rail to Pointe Noire.³⁰ Even prior to the war, the river and rail option entailed lost revenues to the government; the long journey down river enabling many logs to be stolen and informally processed before they reached Brazzaville itself. It is not always clear what happens to the money that is paid by logging companies in taxes. According to some reports, part of the US\$ 4 million paid by one new company for its concessions paid the rebels to come back while another part simply “evaporated”.³¹

Monitoring and enforcement capacity of the Ministry is weak. As with most government departments, they are virtually non-existent in the north of the country. Civil servants go for long periods of time without pay, which not only seriously demotivates staff but also means that they must look for alternative sources of income. This situation facilitates corruption and informal “taxation”, for example on commercial bushmeat.³²

Production and EU trade

In the second half of the 1980s, timber production grew consistently, attaining a total of 883,000 cubic metres in 1990. But during the first half of the 1990s, timber production in Congo decreased, in contrast to the rest of the region – in 1995, production had dropped by half to 441,000 cubic metres.³³ In 1996, production went up to 560,000 cubic metres but in the following year declined to its lowest level in the last 30 years, 300,000 cubic metres, because of the civil war.³⁴ Since then, however, log production has begun to rise again: 550,000 cubic metres in 1998³⁵ and an estimated 800,000 cubic metres in 1999.³⁶ The government plans even further expansion of the industrial forestry sector, aiming to more than double timber production in the year 2000 up to 2 million cubic metres.³⁷

Most timber exports are of logs rather than processed products. In 1997, total log exports from Congo were 257,449 cubic metres; sawn wood exports were 37,930 cubic metres; veneer exports were 41,666 cubic metres and plywood was 2,613 cubic metres.³⁸ In 1999, log exports were 203,544 cubic metres; sawn wood exports were 61,861 cubic metres; veneer exports were 16,540 cubic metres and plywood was zero.³⁹ In the early 1990s, exports of pulpwood from plantations were significant – 670,000 cubic metres in 1990 – but have since declined because the plantations are depleted.⁴⁰ Since 1984, the Sapelli and Okoumé tree species represent 60-65% of total exports. Ayous, Bahia and Sipo are the next three most targeted commercial species.⁴¹

The European Union continues to be the primary destination for timber exports from Congo, with France, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain being the main importers. Outside the EU, the main importer is Japan. In addition, it is believed that considerable volumes of logs are being smuggled out of the north of the country from some of the newly allocated concessions.

International financial assistance

As in the other countries in Central Africa (apart from the DRC), Congo (Brazzaville) receives support from the EU forest conservation and sustainable development programme, ECOFAC, which has a project in the 280,000 hectare National Park of Odzala in the north-west of the country. Odzala has an exceptional variety of different landscapes and is home to a number of forest and savannah animal species such as chimpanzees and elephants. ECOFAC is developing the sustainable management of the park, including the promotion of sustainable economic activities in the park’s surroundings, such as eco-tourism, to provide an alternative to bushmeat hunting.⁴²

Logging companies appear to have received funds from multilateral organisations, although the connections are not always clear. In 1990, for example, the African Development Bank granted a loan to a French company, J. Lalanne, which only three years before had gained a contract to run a recently-established semi-state company,⁴³ Société Forestière Algéro-Congolaise.⁴⁴ In 1994, the French national development agency, Agence Française du Développement (AFD) – or CFD (*Caisse Française du Développement*) as it then was – was

involved in the negotiations for a substantial equity stake that J. Lalanne had in another logging company, SNBS (Société Nouvelle des Bois de Sangha).

The World Bank's investment in Congo (Brazzaville) has been controversial. In the 1990s, for example, together with a number of African banks, it financed the construction by another logging company, SCBO, of a sawmill that was never completed.⁴⁵ SCBO was a semi-state company, partly owned by French interests,⁴⁶ one of whose directors was Congo's President.⁴⁷ The company has recently been privatised and is now owned by the German company Danzer (see Part III – Company Profiles).⁴⁸

Environmental impacts

The forests of the south and north have exhibited different levels and intensity of environmental impacts as a result of forestry operations. In the south, where industrial logging has been taking place since the 1940s, forests have been opened up by forestry companies, attracting migrant farmers who further clear the forest for agriculture.⁴⁹ In the north, the area of logging concessions is rapidly increasing and, given the lack of effective monitoring and enforcement of these remote forests, the ecological sustainability of forestry operations is not ensured.⁵⁰ Exploitation of the forests has facilitated commercial bushmeat hunting, which is decimating wildlife in a number of areas. The loss of biodiversity which results from logging has long-term consequences both ecologically and socially.

Although the country has protected areas, the capacity to monitor them is minimal. In the National Park of Coundkouati, which is on the Atlantic coast near the country's border with Gabon, the government has granted logging concessions of 9,000 hectares in the 500,000 hectare reserve, which was set up with grants from the EU, the World Bank and several environmental organisations.⁵¹ The lack of monitoring in the park – there are just 22 ill-equipped rangers for the entire park – has also enabled poachers to operate freely in the reserve – they have set up a vast encampment within it. The park suffers, moreover, from offshore oil pollution.⁵²

Social impacts

The presence of forestry companies in the north of the country has positive and negative impacts. Many of the companies act as a surrogate for the state, creating islands of stability in otherwise neglected areas of the country. Nevertheless, their practices have critical shortcomings, such as discrimination against local people in general and against Pygmies in particular, and promotion of commercial bushmeat hunting. Forestry companies generally only recognise the rights of and enter into communication with Bantu villagers, neglecting the Pygmy forest dwellers. Bantu communities therefore tend to get most of the benefits from the operations, such as cash and goods, schools and dispensaries. Roads tend to go through their villages. Despite some positive developments, however, logging operations have negative impacts to a greater or lesser degree on all local people. From local people's perspectives, the main problems are:

The companies do not listen sufficiently to local people's needs.

Although villagers generally support logging companies, there tends to be profound disagreements over specific issues. Local Congolese may want a school to be built if the company logs their area, or they may not want large Sapelli trees near the village to be felled as they provide large quantities of caterpillars that are eaten when there is little other food available (see Sapelli Tree feature, page 7). But unless villagers take direct action, such as blocking the loggers' roads with barricades, their needs are rarely listened to or respected.⁵³

Companies tend not to provide employment for the local people.

The local population strongly resent the logging companies employing so many people from outside the forest areas they are exploiting. The 'Front National de la Sangha' was the main vehicle for expressing this discontent in the mid to late 1990s when violent demonstrations took place. Although now somewhat suppressed, the Front still has large popular support. The Front wished to impose a quota system for employing local people, but since a whole generation of northern Congolese has not had access to an adequate education, they do not possess the skills required by the logging companies.⁵⁴

Mbendjele women and children, Sangha region



Traditional rights are violated.

In some areas, “eco-guards” armed with automatic rifles patrol the buffer zone around the national parks, an activity many local people regard as a gross violation of their traditional rights. In some cases, elephant poachers have been hired as eco-guards in an attempt to stop them poaching. It has been reported in the past that these guards often intimidated local people, and allowed their former poaching colleagues to pass freely through checkpoints but confiscated local people’s small amounts of game. The system has created distrust and antagonism between some conservation workers and local people and, in certain places, has strengthened the position of some of the best-connected poachers who are commissioned to hunt trophy animals.



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Bantu fishing village on the Sangha River

The commercial bushmeat trade is destroying the fauna of the region.

As in the other countries of the Congo Basin, poachers gain access to remote areas by using logging roads. Some areas have now been trapped out, making subsistence hunting much more difficult. Many Pygmy and Bantu communities who live in these areas are very distressed, especially because they are fearful of resisting the well-connected commercial meat traders.⁵⁵

Pygmies are particularly negatively affected by logging operations.

Logging operations often disrupt the lives of local people, but especially Pygmies, who rely on the forest for game, other food and raw materials. Unless constrained, the demand for bush meat to supply workers’ communities is so intense that it swiftly leads to the severe impoverishment of forest opened up by logging roads. This has dire consequences for Pygmy groups who use these areas of forest for their subsistence activities. The majority of logging company employees are Bantu because some logging companies believe that Pygmies are unreliable, although in the forest Pygmies are often used to locate the best trees. Pygmies resent this perceived favouritism and find it difficult to obtain reasonably remunerated employment in logging towns. In rural areas, schools and hospitals are always built in Bantu villages where there is strong discrimination against Pygmies, making access to these social provisions difficult for most Pygmies. Unless concerted efforts are made to involve Pygmy people in the management of their forests and for them to share in the profits gained, future generations are likely to feel cheated of their heritage. They will find themselves with forests devoid of game or commercially valuable trees surrounding inaccessible parks and other people’s farms.⁵⁶

Companies logging the forests of Congo

Although a number of forestry enterprises in Congo (Brazzaville) have been parastatals, foreign capital (particularly European capital) has always played an important role in the sector. Under the macro-economic reform policies prescribed by multilateral lenders, privatisation of the former parastatals is currently taking place and is increasing the penetration by transnational corporations in the forestry sector.

In line with government plans to increase production, twelve new logging licences have been granted recently.⁵⁷ In February 2000, logging contracts were signed with Lebanese and Malaysian companies. The Lebanese company was granted a 15-year renewable contract for 199,000 hectares in the north-eastern region of Likouala, while the Congolese-Malaysian company, Afri-Woods, was granted 104,000 hectares in the south-west of Congo.⁵⁸

The German company Danzer (*see* page 55) and the French company Rougier (*see* page 60) have recently been awarded concessions in the north of the country. Other European companies operating in the country are the German company Feldmeyer (*see* page 57); a consortium of companies operating BOPLAC (*see* Bruynzeel, page 55 and DLH Nordisk, page 56); the German company Wonnemann (*see* page 66).

The map on page 37 is based on 1994 Ministry data, updated as far as possible with new information on concession holders, *see* Appendix. Not all new concession holders, however, have been identified.



Democratic Republic of Congo

Political, social and economic framework

AFTER 32 YEARS of “kleptocracy” under Dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, Zaire was renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1997. Hopes that its poverty-stricken people would see more than a change of name in their country were, however, soon thwarted.

Located on the equator, east of Congo (Brazzaville), DRC would be a landlocked country but for 37 kilometres of coastline. It is the largest country in the Congo Basin region. Of its 2.3 million square kilometres, nearly half is forestland (1.1 million square kilometres in 1993).¹ DRC contains 12.5% of the world’s remaining tropical rainforest – only Brazil and Indonesia have larger areas. As well as its immense forests, it has vast deposits of cobalt, copper and diamonds. Its network of rivers are a natural transport system and huge potential source of hydroelectricity. Its farming land is rich; 70% of the population is involved in subsistence farming. Many of the country’s 48 million people depend on the forests for non-timber forest products such as food, building materials and medicines.² In 1994, both urban and non-urban dwellers collected fuelwood and charcoal from the forest at an estimated rate of 42.6 million cubic metres every year.³

Despite being such a large and relatively fertile country rich in natural resources, there is hunger, competition for land, and pressure on the rainforest arising from landlessness. In large areas of DRC, the people with power have managed to expropriate the land from those less powerful than themselves. For example, although the region of Kivu, which borders the Ituri Forest, is one of the greenest and most luxuriant parts of DRC, one researcher noted that food security there “*is not about how lush and productive the region is, but about access to its lushness, and to its product.*”⁴ Those pushed off their land move into forest areas to clear other land for cultivation, often making use of the roads created by logging companies.⁵

The country has had decades of economic mismanagement, corruption, lack of investment in infrastructure and widespread insecurity caused by political conflicts. Real wages, even before the upheavals of the 1990s, were one-tenth of what they were at independence from Belgium in 1960. Chronic malnutrition is rife, and 80% of people live in absolute poverty.⁶ The economy shrank under President Mobutu; GNP in 1996 was less than half that of 1980, while per capita GNP fell even more dramatically.⁷ Per capita GNP in 1997 was US\$ 110, the lowest of the six countries featured in this report and the second lowest in Africa (Mozambique being the lowest at US\$ 90).⁸ The total debt of DRC in 1996 was US\$ 12.8 billion, including nearly US\$ 7 billion in arrears, the majority of which was owed to bilateral creditors.⁹ Despite its unrepayable debt and qualification for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC), the country has little chance of having its debt cancelled because of the ongoing political and economic upheavals.

DRC has a long history of conflict. Before independence in 1960, a particularly brutal colonial regime had dominated the country for decades. In 1965, General Mobutu Sese Seko took over in a military coup and stayed in power for over 30 years, until Laurent Kabila ousted him in another military coup in 1997. Mobutu presided over widescale corruption, paying large amounts of money to friends and foe alike to keep himself in power.¹⁰ He is alleged to have built up a massive personal fortune,¹¹ while receiving foreign assistance from the US, Europe and international organisations such as the World Bank. When Kabila took power, western nations signalled their willingness to work with the government upon condition that it committed itself to democracy and human rights. Hopes that Kabila would meet these requirements, however, soon faded. Since the assassination of Kabila in January 2001 and his replacement by his 31-year-old son, the country remains unstable.¹²

DRC is at the centre of what has been called the “First African War” because of the number of countries involved – Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and, briefly, Chad on the side of President Kabila’s government, Uganda and Rwanda on the side of the rebels. The war has worsened the economic and political situation. Human rights’ abuses by all parties in the conflict have been reported. Many commercial logging companies have suspended or closed their operations in the country. The war has pushed refugees into the forested areas, thereby increasing population density, and has intensified insecurity, two factors that contribute to deforestation. Amnesty International estimates that as many as one million people have been internally displaced, on top of the several hundred thousand who have fled to neighbouring countries.¹³

Forest policy and practice

President Laurent Kabila made many promises when he assumed power in 1997, including pledges in 1998 to establish a genuine conservation agenda for DRC.¹⁴ No progress has been made since. The civil war that started in 1998 devastated large parts of the country such as the province of Orientale (formerly Haute Zaire) and has halted most logging operations throughout the country. If logging resumes, however, it is questionable whether it will contribute to the reconstruction and sustainable development of DRC.

Logging companies operate in DRC without an institutional or legislative framework to ensure the forests' sustainable and equitable use. According to a study conducted by the World Resources Institute, none of the concessions in DRC have been managed responsibly¹⁵ and little changed under Kabila. Many concessions were still operating as they did under President Mobutu, that is, by indirect management through European logging companies because of a lack of trained local staff. Concessions which were dormant tended not to be withdrawn, although many of them had been granted to cronies of Mobutu's regime.¹⁶

In 1988, over 21 million hectares were designated for timber production.¹⁷ At present, concessions cover approximately 11.8 million hectares of which 8.2 million hectares are possibly active. The active concessions are in the provinces of Bas Congo, Bandundu, Orientale and Equateur. The most important logging company in the country is Siforco, a subsidiary of the German company, Danzer, which holds 2.9 million hectares – one quarter of the country's concessions.

Formally, a company must spend one year evaluating the concession area and three years constructing infrastructure such as roads before it can have guaranteed use of the concession area. Logging concessions are allocated on a renewable 25-year lease.¹⁸ But loggers have commented that, in practice, the contracts can be terminated at any time.¹⁹ Logging companies also report that they have to give 10% of their profits to chiefs, bureaucrats and generals.²⁰ Tax revenues from logging are low. Concessionaires pay US\$2 per hectare for each 1,000 hectare block for which they have been granted a "Permit to Cut".²¹ A law from the Mobutu era mandates anyone who cuts a tree to replant one or two trees.²² In practice, companies and individuals do not comply with this law.

Most timber exports from DRC are of logs rather than processed wood. The only measure taken to encourage the export of processed products rather than logs is variable taxation. The "ad valorem" tax on exports is 4% for logs, 2% on sawn wood and 1.5 % for veneer sheets.²³ In April 1999, log exports were briefly banned, an initiative which foreign logging companies claimed would lead to the end of the forestry sector in the country. They put pressure on the government, and the prohibition was lifted three months later.²⁴

Production and EU trade

In 1995, DRC produced about 300,000 cubic metres of logs.²⁵ Although formal sources suggest that there was a substantial increase in 1996, available figures indicate that total production in that year dropped to 287,000 cubic metres.²⁶ The war slowed production in 1997 to 236,000 cubic metres and still further in 1998 to 224,000 cubic metres.

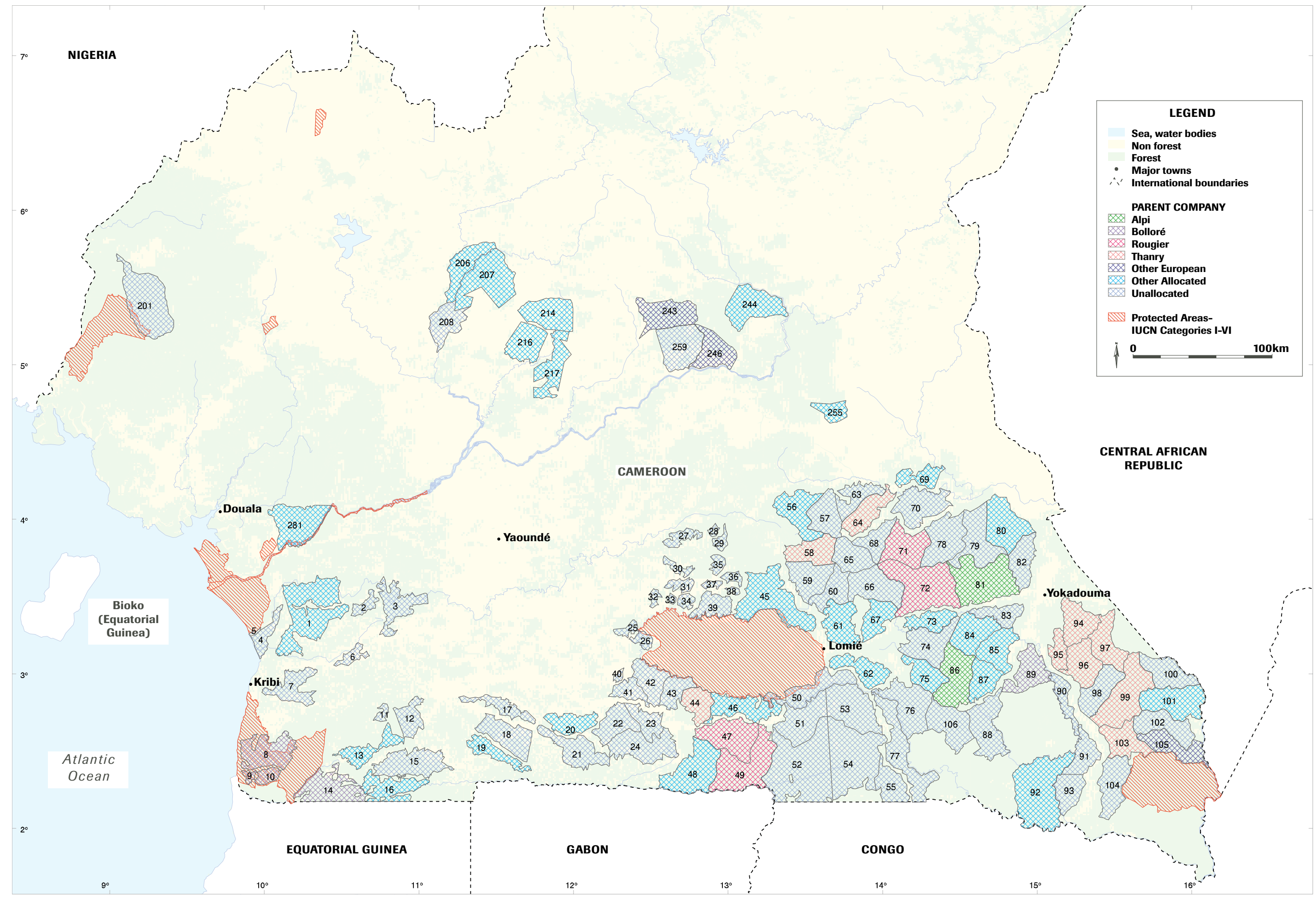
In 1994, log exports totalled 118,000 cubic metres, sawn wood exports came to 41,000 cubic metres and veneer sheet exports amounted to 8,000 cubic metres.²⁷ Data for the following years show approximately the same breakdown between the three types of export, although official data vary. Just as production dropped slightly in 1997 and 1998, so did exports. In 1997, log exports were 103,000 cubic metres, sawn wood exports were 32,000 cubic metres and veneer sheets were 6,000 cubic metres; In 1998, log exports totalled 97,000 cubic metres, sawn wood totalled 37,000 cubic metres and veneer sheets totalled 4,000 cubic metres.²⁸ The main species exported are Sapelli, Sipo, Tola and Iroko, but also Afrormosia, Tima, and Wenge.²⁹ The main importing countries are Portugal, Germany and France.

International financial assistance

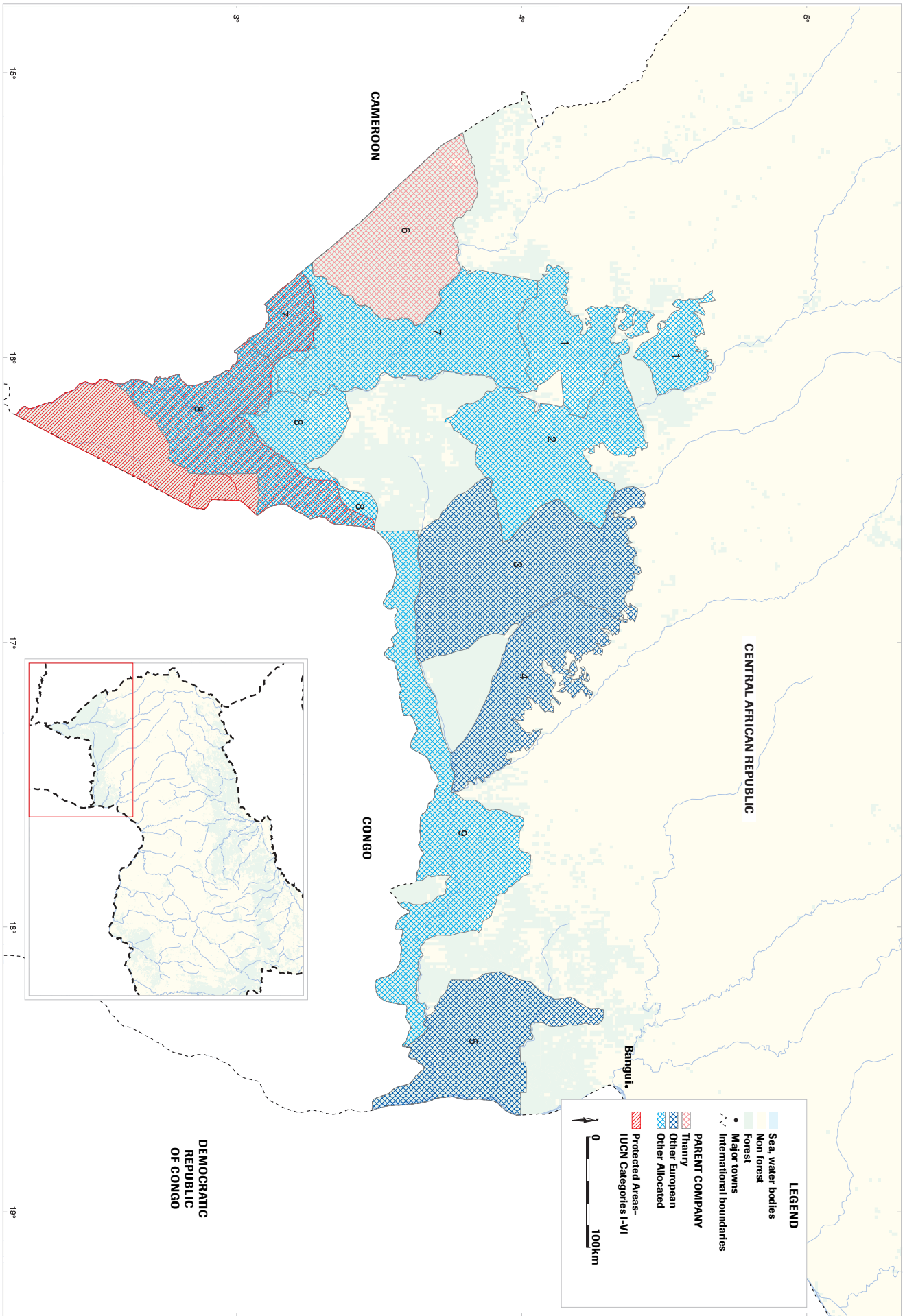
Apart from humanitarian aid, other donor projects in DRC have been affected by the conflict in recent years. EU support through ECOFAC, for example, was prepared for the country, as for other countries in the region, but none of the planned activities has been carried out. In 1990, the World Bank was exerting pressure to increase timber exports to pay the country's debt, and to this end it provided US\$ 12 million more in aid.³⁰

Environmental impacts

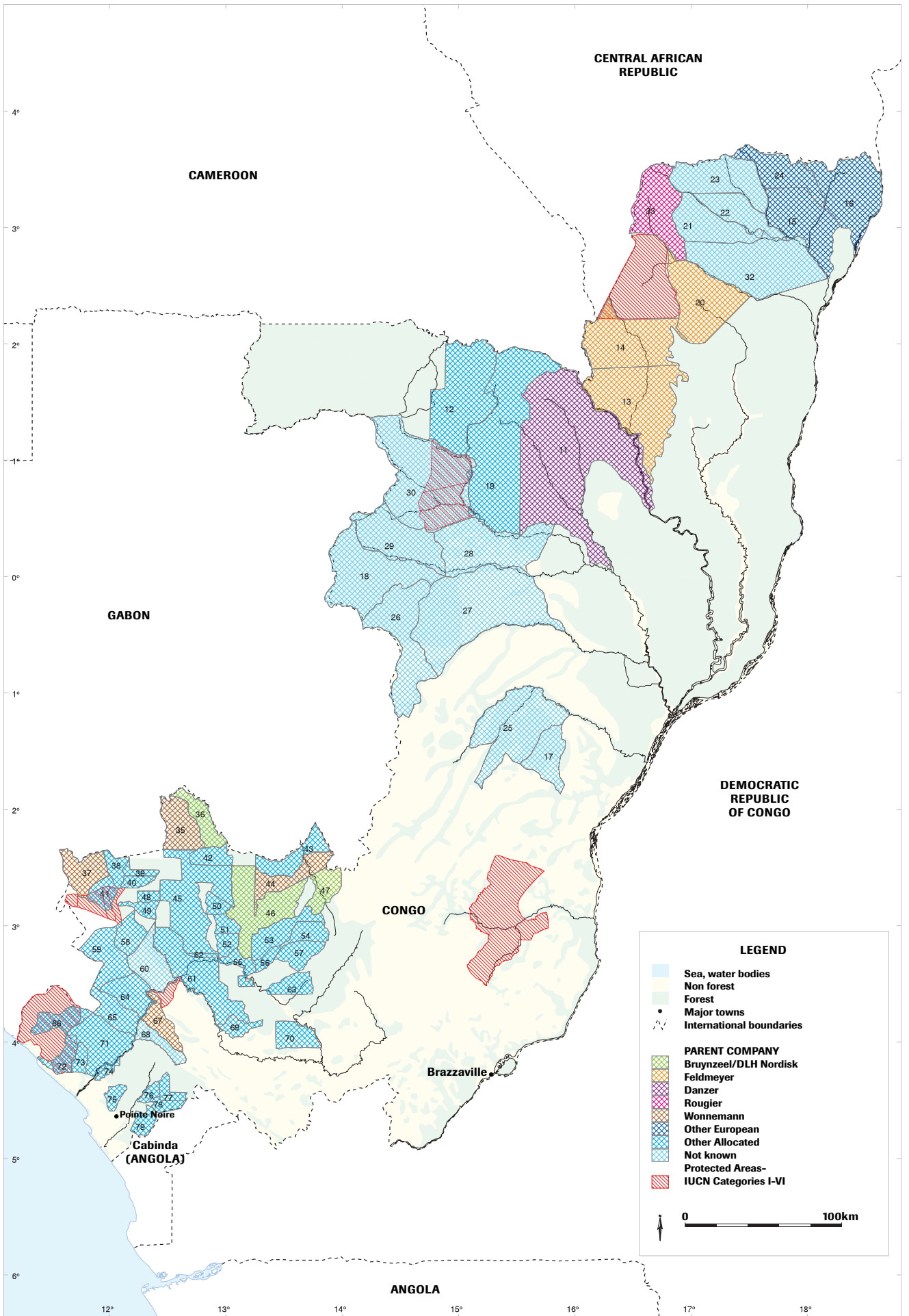
In theory, logging companies who were working in the country up until the civil war broke out in 1998 would return to take a second cut. In practice, they did not, since the amount of forest destroyed during the first cut, and the influx of shifting cultivators, have both meant that there were not enough valuable trees left for a second cut. Logging is thus both highly selective and unsustainable. Only the best trees are taken – the average timber yield is 8.7 cubic metres (less than one tree) per hectare, a yield so low that it effectively quickens the pace at which more



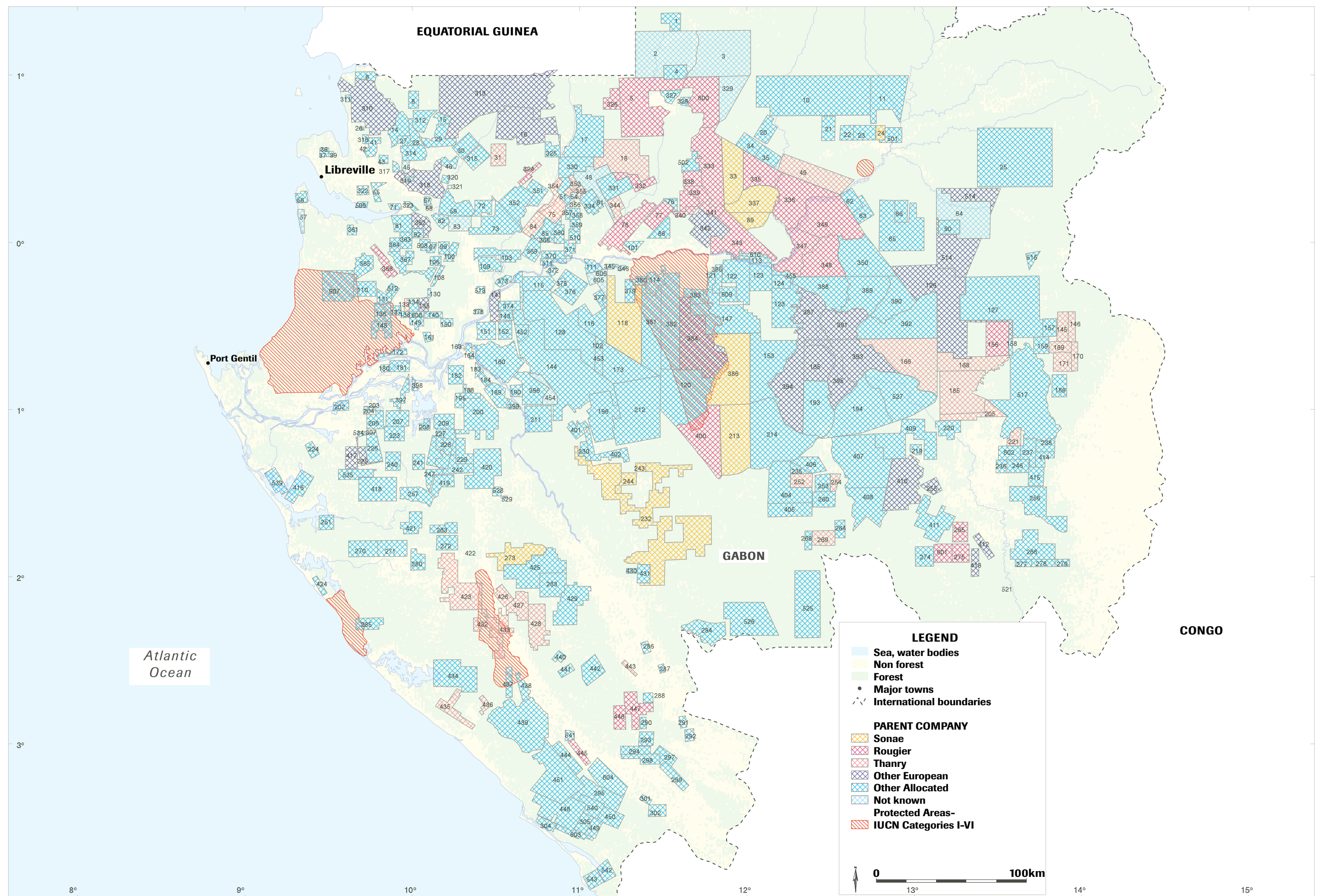
Map 1: Cameroon



Map 2: Central African Republic



Map 3: Congo (Brazzaville)



Map 4: Gabon

In social terms, the records of logging companies are mixed. On the one hand, they provide a certain level of health, education and transportation services to villagers that cannot currently be provided by the State. On the other, they pay Congolese workers very low wages and feel no responsibility towards them once they have finished logging and moved away.

rainforest is opened up. The massive trunks can be taken out of the forest only on feeder tracks and logging routes before travelling down river; thus these selectively-logged areas are criss-crossed with a network of roads. The heaviest logging has occurred in the province of Bas-DRC, which is relatively close to both the capital, Kinshasa, and the ports. In the wake of the loggers, people have moved in to clear huge areas for farming. Hardly any primary rainforest now remains in Bas-DRC. The other rainforest areas of DRC face a similar future if logging continues to impoverish the ecosystem, and land appropriation and lower prices for agricultural and forest produce continue to impoverish the poor.³¹

There are 18 protected areas covering an area of 18 million – 7.69% of the country.³² Although the percentage of formally protected areas in the country is relatively high, in practice forests in these areas are at risk of being seriously degraded.

Because of the war, the government cannot manage, let alone monitor many of the formally protected areas. The Maiko National Park and Okapi Wildlife Reserve, for instance, are in the eastern regions of DRC currently occupied by the rebels and their foreign allies; the Virunga National Park is on the border with Uganda, one of the countries supporting the rebels. Even before the current war, these areas had been threatened by the arrival of large numbers of refugees from Rwanda who had been pushed into the forest by Kabila's rebel army, ADFL (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo). The retreating Zairian army (fighting on the side of Mobutu) also damaged many eastern areas.³³

But monitoring of protected areas outside the war zone is also deficient. The state department responsible for protected areas, the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN), spends between 75 and 85% of its budget in Kinshasa,³⁴ leaving just one guard per 20,000 hectares in the field. Moreover, because official pay is low, guards sometimes depend on handouts from illegal hunters and mining operations.³⁵

It is not surprising that logging takes place in protected areas. A UNDP report estimates that, in 1995, between 7,000 and 10,000 cubic metres of timber were leaving the southern part of Virunga National Park every day.³⁶ The destruction of these areas has serious economic consequences, particularly for an impoverished country. In the late 1970s, tourism revenues from chimpanzee viewing amounted to over US\$ 1 million for the ICCN, financing the management of all protected areas.³⁷

Social impacts

In social terms, the records of logging companies are mixed. On the one hand, they provide a certain level of health, education and transportation services to villagers that cannot currently be provided by the State.³⁸ On the other, they pay Congolese workers very low wages and feel no responsibility towards them once they have finished logging and moved away. This means that those who have moved into the forest to work for the company often have to switch to clearing the forest to grow food in order to feed their families.³⁹ Moreover, companies tend to ignore safety requirements, such as provision of safety equipment, so accidents are frequent but compensation is rare.⁴⁰

Insecure land rights also cause deforestation. Historically, shifting cultivation, customary tenure and an abundance of land meant that land was held by groups in which the elders had to remain responsive to the needs of the village as a whole. Conflicts were resolved by people moving to establish other villages in which the chiefs or elders sought to attract people to settle rather than to exclude them. Once Belgian colonial law, enforced by European colonial companies, was imposed, people had to remain in the area where they were registered and to grow crops to pay as tax. The post-colonial state has continued the colonial policy of ensuring that chiefs remain in power only if they retain control over their population in a way that extracts wealth for the benefit of those who control the state. In this framework, all land belongs to the state. In practice, however, land belongs to the chief to whom peasants must pay their dues to use the land, dues which those higher up the hierarchy can then extract from the local chief.⁴¹ This arrangement does not secure villagers' access to land, since the chief can use his connections with those higher up the hierarchy to support him in selling land to anyone he wishes to. Those pushed off their land often move into forest areas which are accessible because of roads opened by logging companies. They clear the land, contributing to deforestation, which in turn makes forest resources such as fuelwood more scarce. In some areas of Orientale where deforestation was already occurring in 1990, women of all ages have to walk longer and longer distances to obtain fuelwood, up to six or seven kilometres.⁴²

The more powerful people tend to expropriate the land from those less powerful. Logging simply replicates on a large-scale the continual expropriation of land and resources from the poor. This is a form of wealth accumulation by the powerful which is based not on the accumulation and investment of capital, nor the maintenance of a strong political structure, but on the intentional creation and perpetuation of insecurity at all levels of society. This occurred during Mobutu's regime and did not appear to have changed under Kabila's government.⁴³

As in the other countries of the Central African region, the Pygmy peoples are particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of logging. Their numbers are relatively high in the DRC, estimates varying between 39,000 and 154,000. They are broadly divided into the Bacwa, Batwa and the Bambuti. They face several threats, such as the destruction of their forests, malnutrition and diseases including tuberculosis and leprosy. Venereal diseases have made many Bacwa women infertile, while in some areas the Bambuti have suffered badly from alcoholism and violence at the hands of both rebels and regular armies. On their forest lands, the historic relationships of exchange with local farmers are being severely disrupted by the influx of farmers from outside the area who want to grow cash crops. Pygmy rights to forest lands appear not to be recognised in customary or national law. The Pygmies are additionally at risk through some conservation initiatives. Plans for a forest reserve to protect the central Ituri Forest, for example, includes a core area where hunter-gatherers are not permitted to hunt or gather.⁴⁴ In the 1970s and 1980s, Batwa Pygmies were expelled from the Kahuzi-Biega forests in Kivu, without compensation or provision of alternative lands.⁴⁵

Companies logging the forests of the Democratic Republic of Congo

It is not clear which companies have suspended operations but plan to resume once the conflict has lessened, and which companies have ceased operations altogether. No map of concessions is available but field work undertaken in October 1999 gleaned the following information on concession holders. It should be noted that most current concessions are believed to have suspended operations because of the war.

A number of Asian companies were reportedly considering the acquisition of logging concessions in DRC, for example, Idris Hydraulic and Innovest,⁴⁶ but no further information was available during field visits in 1999. In addition, several companies are believed to have ceased operations altogether because of the political situation and/or financial difficulties. These include: Amexbois; Agrifor; La Forestiere; and Soexforco.⁴⁷ Recent unconfirmed information suggests that a Thai forestry company, DARA Forest, is buying timber from rebels in eastern DRC.

Table 4: Current concession holders in DRC

Companies	Ownership and/or nationality of capital	Concessions size (hectares)	Location of concessions (Province)	Production (cubic metres) 1998
Siforco (formerly Siforzal)	Danzer (Germany) Holding company: Interholco (Switzerland)	2.9 million	Equateur and 1,346,100 hectares in Orientale	106,000
Soforma group/ Sodefor/CFT/Forabola	Nord Sud Timber (Switzerland),	1.138 million	Bas Congo and Bandundu plus dormant concessions in Equateur, Orientale and Bas Congo	37,000
Sokinex (previously part of the Soforma group); affiliates: Sicomo and Sogeva	Belgian entrepreneur	405,000	Equateur plus dormant concessions in Equateur and Orientale	29,000
Safbois	CFE (Belgium)	374,000	Equateur	17,000
Scibois	French	205,000	Equateur	4,000
Sicobois	Not known	779,000	Equateur	25,000
Agripro	Indian family	360,000	Equateur Orientale	4,000
BBC	Bakrie Brothers (Lebanon)	876,000	Equateur Orientale	No production yet

Sources: *Field Visit (1999)*; *AidEnvironment, 2000*



Equatorial Guinea

Political, social and economic framework

EQUATORIAL GUINEA, the only Spanish-speaking country in the Congo Basin, consists of several small islands off the coast of Cameroon and a section of mainland between Gabon and Cameroon. In total, the country occupies 28,000 square kilometres: Rio Muni, the continental part accounts for most of this with 26,000 square kilometres, while Bioko, the largest island and location of the capital, Malabo, is 2,000 square kilometres in size. Some government ministries have recently moved to Bata, the major town on the mainland.

The Spanish colonial power made little attempt to provide for the development of the people, establishing an export-orientated plantation economy which continued after independence in 1968. Cocoa and coffee were the main export commodities until the mid-1980s, when timber gained in importance. Drilling for off-shore oil began in 1996 and large deposits were discovered in 1998. Oil has transformed the country's economy. GNP per capita in 1997 was US\$ 1,050.¹ As with the other oil-producing countries in the region, however, the bulk of the population does not benefit but remains in poverty.² The contracts for oil production agreed with the government in the early 1990s are highly favourable to the transnational corporations which operate in the sector and, as a result, government revenue has been limited.³ In addition, there are widespread concerns about corruption and the diversion of revenues by those in power.

Between 80% and 90% of the population of 0.4 million depend directly on forest resources,⁴ such as wood for fuel, medicines, food and building materials. 80% of the population live on the mainland of Rio Muni, including a sizeable minority of Bakola Pygmies in the north-west of the country.⁵ The bushmeat trade is an important source of revenue for the rural population, mainly on the island of Bioko where it has replaced revenues derived from cocoa.⁶ Agriculture is mainly based on shifting cultivation. Traditionally, the fallow periods varied from 8 to 15 years, but with increasing pressure, they are becoming shorter, decreasing the soil fertility.

From its independence from Spain in 1968 until the late 1970s, Equatorial Guinea was governed by the brutal dictatorship of Francisco Macias.⁷ In 1979, Macias' nephew, Obiang Nguema, toppled his uncle, but political repression and human rights abuses continue as before. Up to one-third of the people live in exile.⁸ Because of international pressure, attempts have been made since 1991 to demonstrate changes towards democracy, but little has changed in practice. One-party rule officially ended in 1992 and elections were held in 1993, 1996 and 1999. The UN and the EU, however, refused to attend the electoral process because they assessed that the conditions for fair elections had not been met.⁹ Reports of human rights abuses abound.¹⁰ Opponents of the regime have been imprisoned for up to 28 years and, in early 1999, in anticipation of the elections, opposition party candidates were arrested.¹¹ In January 1998, there were large-scale arrests of the Bubi ethnic minority following unrest on Bioko Island. The people were accused of belonging to an illegal movement for self-determination; at trials condemned by international observers, 15 people were sentenced to death and over 100 imprisoned. In 1998, Amnesty International reported that the government held dozens of tortured detainees incommunicado; many had been detained because they were Bubi. At least five died in prison.¹² There are also unconfirmed reports of mass graves of Bubis.¹³

Forest policy and practice

Forests cover around 2.2 million hectares of Equatorial Guinea – most of the country. Of these, all the productive forests – approximately 1.5 million hectares – have been allocated as industrial logging concessions.¹⁴ Industrial timber production has rapidly increased since the mid-1990s.¹⁵ Forestry is now the second most important economic sector after oil.¹⁶

Logging operations are a cause of concern for several reasons. Firstly, a brutal dictatorship prevents sustainable development. It is difficult for logging companies to operate in the country without condoning the government to a greater or lesser extent. Secondly, the necessary mechanisms to ensure sustainable and socially equitable forestry are not in place. Thirdly, the rate at which the industrial production of timber is increasing means that logging is unsustainable. The forests of Bioko have already been seriously damaged¹⁷ and, according to the IMF, the forest resources of Equatorial Guinea could be severely depleted by the year 2012.¹⁸

Since January 1998, the government entity responsible for forestry matters is the Ministry of Forests and the Environment (Ministerio de Bosques y Medio Ambiente).¹⁹ The Minister of Forests is the son of the President, who is believed to be close to the largest logging company

The rate at which the industrial production of timber is increasing means that logging is unsustainable. According to the IMF, the forest resources of Equatorial Guinea could be severely depleted by the year 2012.

operating in the country, the Malaysian-owned Shimmer. Forest oversight is under the responsibility of the Forest Monitoring Body (*Cuerpo de la Guarderia Forestal*).²⁰

The sector is ruled by the Law of the Forestry Sector of 18 July 1997. The forests of Equatorial Guinea are divided into two domains, productive forests (*Dominio de Produccion Forestal*) and conservation forests (*Dominio de Conservación*).²¹

Production forests are classified according to three different arrangements:

- § *Forests plots* are small areas of primary or secondary forest located within farms. A logging permit has to be obtained from the forest administration to exploit them.
- § *Community forests* are granted permanently to local communities because of their traditional rights.
- § *National forests* belong to the state. Private companies can exploit them only in partnership with the state which always remains the majority shareholder.²² In practice, most of the country's forests are held under concessions for industrial timber production.

There are 80 logging concessions in the continental region of the country covering an area of approximately 1.5 million hectares.²³ In theory, forest concessions cannot be larger than 50,000 hectares²⁴ and each corporate body cannot have more than one concession.²⁵ Concessions last between 5 and 15 years and are renewable,²⁶ but companies cannot use the forests again commercially until after a 25-year rest period (art. 53 of the 1997 Forestry Sector Law).²⁷ In practice, there is considerable flux in concession ownership and at least one company is believed to be operating a number of concessions.

By law (art. 35), concessions must process 60% of their production²⁸ (a requirement of previous forestry codes as well), but in practice most timber from Equatorial Guinea is exported as logs. In 1994, only 4.8% of production was processed locally;²⁹ in 1995, this figure rose to 15%, still considerably below the legal requirements.³⁰ In 1996, the government ordained that companies which process less than 60% of their production must pay fines of up to 10% of the value of their production.³¹ Companies holding concessions of more than 10,000 hectares for more than 10 years are required to have a small wood-processing unit. There are, however, only four sawmills and three secondary processing units in the country, not all of which are in operation.³²

Certain operating guidelines are stipulated by the forestry legislation, such as replanting; borders of rivers, streams, roads and hills of more than 45 degrees slope should not be logged (art. 54).³³ Regarding social obligations, Article 35 of the 1997 Forestry Sector Law specifies that concessionaires are required to build a number of facilities for the local people, such as a health centre, a church, a house for the teacher and a school.³⁴

In practice, enforcement of all the various legal requirements is virtually non-existent because the state does not have sufficient field staff and cannot therefore monitor logging activities adequately nor carry out inventories of forest resources.³⁵ Some producers, including foreign-owned ones, do not respect forestry and conservation codes, particularly by logging outside their concession boundaries.³⁶

Conservation forests comprise four different types of protected areas: National Parks, Scientific Reserves, Endangered Animal Refuges and Wildlife Sanctuaries. There are nine protected areas, of which six lie in Rio Muni, two on the island of Bioko and one on the island of Annobon. In total, they cover an area of 326,000 hectares.³⁷ In theory, these areas are managed according to the recommendations of the IUCN, as specified in article 14.³⁸ In practice, they are not actively protected and some have been commercially exploited.³⁹

Production and EU trade

Timber production has constantly increased since the early 1990s. In 1991, total production amounted to 169,579 cubic metres but by 1996 had gone up to 471,165 cubic metres, exceeding both the maximum estimated sustainable limit of 400,000 cubic metres per year⁴⁰ and the legal limit of 450,000 cubic metres.⁴¹ In 1997, production nearly doubled, totalling 757,173 cubic metres.⁴²

The main species targeted is Okoumé, which in 1996 represented 65% of total production.⁴³ Other commercially important species are Ilomba (10%), Tali (2%), Azobe (2%), Fuma, Padouk, and Andouk, which is exploited mainly by a Malaysian-owned company, Shimmer International.⁴⁴ Okoumé, Ilomba and Andouk represent 88% of total production.⁴⁵

Until 1992, Europe was the destination for 85% of log production, with Spain receiving 43% of total log production. In the mid-1990s, however, after Asian companies entered the market, Asia became the main destination for Equatorial Guinea's log exports.^{46,47} In 1994, 54% of timber exports went to Asian markets, especially Japan and, to a lesser degree, China. Europe remains the main destination for processed products – 99% of processed products are exported to Europe,⁴⁸ and Spain alone imports 85% of Equatorial Guinea's processed wood

products.⁴⁹ In spite of the regulations aimed at ensuring that wood is processed, logs represent 80% of total wood exports.⁵⁰

International financial assistance

EU development assistance to Equatorial Guinea is currently suspended; its resumption is tied to improvements in human rights.⁵¹ ECOFAC, however, funds a project in the national park of Monte Alen, in the mountains of Niefang, which covers an area of 140,000 hectares.⁵² The EU has also provided funds to the Equatorial Guinea forestry sector to assist with the development of the 1997 forestry code.

Historically, the main countries providing funds to Equatorial Guinea have been France and Spain. During the dictatorship of Macias, France provided export credits for the construction of prestige buildings by what is now called the Société Française de Dragages et Travaux Publiques. In return for this aid, French interests were allegedly given concessions in Rio Muni.⁵³ One of the French-connected companies obtaining concessions in the region was the Sociedad Forestal del Rio Muni – it was owned by a Frenchman who had no experience in forestry but connections in French financial circles. The company was granted a concession of 150,000 hectares for 10 years and permission to produce a total of 1.5 million tonnes of timber.⁵⁴ Between 1995 and 1997, the French Development Agency (Agence Française du Développement, AFD) provided US\$ 3.3 million in aid,⁵⁵ but nothing at all in 1997. In the mid-1990s, Spain provided financial assistance to Equatorial Guinea's military to reorganise itself into an army, navy and air force.⁵⁶

Table 5: Companies operating in the Equatorial Guinea forestry sector in 1997

Company	Source of capital (where known)	Volume produced in 1997 cubic metres
Shimmer	Malaysia	321,237
Sofoge	Lebanon	83,744
ABM S.A.	Spain	24,328
Anisok Mongola	Spain	50,826
Exfosa	Spain	24,450
Ecuaforsa		25,319
Bu Forestal		16,214
Eguimasa		22,113
Chilbo	Korea	14,135
Somavi		10,849
SAFI	Spain	15,365
EFG	France	19,428
Madenco		564
Tromad		9,039
Mafesa		1,109
Sinosa	China	11,214
Coguimadera		21,474
Joncomba		3,995
Agroforestal		2,251
Ekolsas		0
Matroguisa		25,889
Sofona		4,308
Alosa (Guiesma)		0
Guiesma		15,004
Foguisa		0
Coteco		0
Isoroy	Spain/France	0
CPF		2,865
Pilma		127
Sijifo	China	31,274
		757,173

Source: UICN 1998 "La Conservación de los Ecosistemas Forestales de Guinea Ecuatorial en los albores del año 2000" Oficina Regional de la UICN para África Central; unpublished sources

Environmental impacts

The current law does not allow commercial logging on Bioko Island. Logging began there in the late 1980s, but donors and the international community exerted pressure for it to stop because of its destructive results. Most damage occurred along the roads. The forests of the coastal areas of Rio Muni are now undergoing their second or third cut and are degrading.⁵⁷ The same will occur in the interior parts of the country, where logging is favoured by lower taxes.

Social impacts

The law states that forestry companies should build facilities for local people. Field work has not been undertaken, however, to ascertain the positive or negative impacts of forestry companies' operations on rural populations. National NGO capacity is weak and democratic space within the general political situation is non-existent.

Companies logging the forests of Equatorial Guinea

Until the mid-1990s, most companies were owned by mainly Spanish capital. Since then, however, Asian companies have become dominant, and Shimmer, a subsidiary of the Malaysian-headquartered company Rimbunan Hijau, now carries out most of the logging in the country.⁵⁸ Shimmer and the Minister for Forestry, the son of the country's dictator, have a close working relationship. There have been unconfirmed reports that Shimmer is encroaching in Monte Alen, where ECOFAC has a sustainable development project. Table 5 presents concession data for 1997. Those companies showing zero production had been active previously. For example, Isoroy produced 26,168 cubic metres of timber in 1995 (see Sonae company profile, page 62).⁵⁹

Gabon

Political, social and economic framework

LOCATED ON THE West Coast of Central Africa, Gabon covers a total area of 268,000 square kilometres. Forests cover an estimated 220,000 square kilometres.¹ Gabon's population of 1.2 million is mainly urban (73%)² and almost one-third of the people live in the capital, Libreville.³ As a result, the percentage of people who depend directly on the forests for subsistence livelihoods is relatively small. Because of its small population and large expanse of primary rainforests, Gabon is often described as a country where long-term sustainable timber production is a viable possibility. However, financial mismanagement of the economy, weaknesses within current forestry policy and practice and new evidence of negative social and environmental impacts at the local level associated with current logging operations (see CIAJE Report, pp 50-52) all call into question the extent to which industrial logging as currently practised will be ecologically sustainable and will alleviate poverty and bring long-term sustainable development to Gabon's people.

Gabon's economy is heavily dependent on natural resource extraction for export markets. The main sectors are oil, timber and manganese, with oil predominant. This dependence leaves Gabon's economy vulnerable to external factors such as the falling price of oil on the world market and the Asian economic crisis, two events that plunged the country into financial crisis in 1998, leading to higher unemployment, especially among young people, and increased poverty.⁴

Until the discovery of oil deposits in the early 1970s, Gabon's economy was largely dependent on its forests, which contributed 75% of its export earnings. The discovery of oil sparked a rural exodus as people moved to the cities in search of jobs and money. In 1995, oil accounted for 40% of GDP, 80% of exports and 60% of government revenues.⁵ Gabon has the highest GNP per capita in Africa – US\$ 4,230 in 1997⁶ – but oil revenues are not reflected in improved standards of living for the majority of the population, who remain in poverty, whilst only a small elite have benefited.⁷ Gabon has a significant and increasing external debt burden, estimated at CFA fr 472 billion (US\$ 614 million) at the end of 1999 and CFA fr 604 billion (US\$ 785 million) at the end of June 2000.⁸ It has had considerable problems meeting repayments to the IMF and other creditors such as France.⁹ As a middle-income country, Gabon does not qualify for debt relief under the HIPC initiative, even though the country has considerable unpayable debts and the World Bank admits that poverty indicators are comparable to the rest of Africa.¹⁰ The IMF and the World Bank are pushing macro-economic reform, central to which are the promotion of the non-oil sectors of the economy, privatisation and civil service reform.

Gabon gained independence from France in 1960 but close ties with the former colonial power were assured through a series of co-operation agreements. The country's long-standing head of state, President Omar Bongo, has been in power since 1967, initially as the hand-picked successor to the country's first president and, since 1990, with a democratic mandate. He has continued to be a long-term friend to France and has mediated in disputes in other African countries, including Congo (Brazzaville). He has been implicated, however, in dubious financial transactions. He is alleged to have received secret payments from Elf, the major oil company operating in the country. In 1999, evidence was presented to a US Senate sub-committee hearing on money laundering and corruption that Bongo transferred US\$ 130 million through a personal bank account in New York.¹¹

Forest policy and practice

The forestry sector is the second source of foreign exchange after oil, accounting for 15% of exports in 1995.¹² Like its Congo Basin neighbours, the Gabonese government and international donors regard the exploitation of timber as central to macro-economic development. This policy is causing a rapid increase in logging.

Although Gabon's forests are often described as being relatively undamaged and offering great potential for long-term sustainable timber production, it is clear that industrial forestry within the current policy framework threatens their future integrity and the country's biodiversity. Production levels are already considerably above the official sustainable production estimates and are set to continue rising. The contribution which forestry sector revenues make to the country's population as a whole and to people living in the locality of forestry operations is questionable.

The entities responsible for regulating the logging industry in Gabon are the Ministry of Water and Forests (Ministère des Eaux et des Forêts), which has responsibility for implement and monitoring forest policy, and SNBG, Société Nationale des Bois du Gabon (see box over).



Société Nationale des Bois du Gabon

SOCIÉTÉ NATIONALE des Bois du Gabon (SNBG) holds the monopoly on the commercialisation of Okoumé and Ozigo trees and collects export taxes for the government. Established in 1976, SNBG is a semi-state organisation, 51% owned by the state and 49% by forest companies.¹³

Its functions include controlling the price, quality and marketing of Okoumé and Ozigo. It sets quotas for these tree species by each company based on the total volume produced the year before. SNBG buys the country's production of Okoumé and Ozigo at a fixed price, then resells it at home and abroad, earning a commission of 7-10%. Moreover, it collects the state's 11% export taxes (*droits et taxes de sortie*).¹⁴

In 1998, as a result of the Asian economic crisis and the corresponding drop in demand for Gabonese logs, SNBG effectively became bankrupt and was unable to pay logging companies. It temporarily suspended its monopoly, allowing producers to negotiate with buyers directly. In 1999, the French national development agency, Agence Française du Développement (AFD), was approached to finance the restructuring of debt to the producers. AFD agreed on condition that it undertook an audit of SNBG.¹⁵ It was reported that, in November 1999, a visit by SNBG to Asia resulted in an agreement being signed in early 2000 between SNBG and the Chinese company Shandong Huasheng for the delivery of 150,000 cubic metres of Okoumé logs per month.¹⁶ In February 2000, the French Wood Industries Union (UIB) questioned SNBG about declining log quality and increased prices. The director of SNBG identified three reasons for declining log quality: increased direct sales of quality logs to Asian markets; increased domestic processing; and a decreasing availability of quality logs from Gabon's forests.¹⁷

As part of Gabon's privatisation programme required by the IMF under the country's Structural Adjustment Programme, SNBG has become one of the main stakeholders in the consortium which has taken over the running of the Transgabonais railway. Other consortium members include the German development agency, DEG, and forestry companies such as the French company Thanry (*see* page 63). The 649 kilometre-long Transgabonais railway is one of the major transport routes in the country, running from Franceville in the east of the country to Owendo (the port near the capital, Libreville) in the west, via Lastoursville and Ndjolé. Some 28% of the freight traffic is logs.¹⁸

Gabon's current forestry code dates from 1982. The legislation was designed explicitly to facilitate commercial logging and has promoted the dominance of overseas capital in the forestry sector.¹⁹ But the legislation is incomplete and ill-enforced. Nearly three-quarters of the decrees planned for the 1982 Law were never written. The procedures and regulations governing company management plans have not been defined. Article 20 requires concession owners to obtain authorisation from the Ministry of Water and Forests before beginning any forestry activity, but the procedures for obtaining such an authorisation were never defined.²⁰

The area of concessions has increased considerably in the last 40 years. Whereas in 1957, less than 10% of Gabon's forests (some two million hectares) were allocated as logging concessions, in 1997, eight million hectares were held under concession²¹ and the estimate for 1999 is 11.9 million hectares.²² Logging has moved over time from the coast to the interior, and most large concessions are now in the interior of the country.

According to the Ministry of Water and Forests, the sustainable annual harvest is 2 million cubic metres. In 1996, total exports amounted to 2.3 million cubic metres and in 1997 to 2.7 million.²³ This trend is likely to continue, given national and international imperatives to diversify the economy away from its reliance on oil.

Enforcement and monitoring of companies' activities is weak,²⁴ largely because the Ministry of Water and Forests does not have sufficient capacity. Only 40% of its agents are assigned to local inspection and offices in charge of field operations. On average, a Ministry agent oversees 86,400 hectares of logging concessions. Agents also lack transport – in several provinces, there is just one vehicle for more than 240,000 hectares of concession area; in the Estuarie province around Libreville, one vehicle is shared by 20 agents.²⁵ The majority of logging companies do not have management plans; in 1999, only five of more than 200 logging companies operating in Gabon had started or planned to start writing a management plan. The rate of wood processing within the country is currently very low at just 7% and taxes are not fully recovered by the government.²⁶

In the coastal logging zone which is reserved for Gabonese nationals, logging is commonly sub-contracted to foreign logging companies. This practice, known as *fermage*, creates disincentives for sustainable forest management because it fosters rent-seeking and involves uncertain short-term agreements. Permit owners receive large rents without feeling responsible for investing in their concessions; logging companies have no interest in doing so either. Moreover, *fermage* means a loss of tax revenue to the government because the transfer of logging rights is poorly regulated. Although the law stipulates that logging permits are strictly personal (and thus not transferable), the decrees to regulate the procedures for the approval of qualifications and the assignments of logging authorisations were never written, thus the law is interpreted in different ways.²⁷ The law also stipulates the minimum means and material a family must possess to obtain a household permit to log, but the Ministry of Forests and Water does not verify this requirement when granting such permits. Therefore, without sufficient means to exploit their land, villagers turn to large logging companies.²⁸

A new forestry law was drafted in 1998 under pressure from the IMF and World Bank, its costs covered by a World Bank loan,²⁹ but it is still awaiting approval by the legislature. Such approval may be affected by the run-up to legislative elections in 2001.

The new law, as described by the US-based NGO Global Forest Watch in its recent review of Gabon's forest policy and practice,³⁰ has been designed to address some of the current technical shortcomings in forest policy and to increase domestic wood processing. Logging permits will be granted for between 20 and 40 years on a public auction system linked to the financial and technical capacity of the company. The maximum size of permits will be for 600,000 hectares, which is considered more appropriate to meet technical sustainable forest management objectives than the current 200,000 hectare limit. Management plans will have to be submitted and approved within three years for all logging operations. There are also plans for the



*Logs transported by river
Ogoué to Port Gentil*

establishment of a National Forest Fund to maintain sustainable management practices. Most of the forest will be classified as production forests and protected areas; some forests will become rural forests, reserved for rural communities who can obtain revenues either by logging them or renting them out to logging companies.³¹

The new forestry law promotes further industrialisation of the forests and does little to address the dominance of foreign capital in the industry. There are no provisions to ensure that industrial forestry contributes to poverty alleviation other than in the broad expectation of its increased fiscal contribution. It is not clear how the new laws will tackle the under-resourced forestry department or how they will ensure that forestry operations are properly monitored and laws enforced. If the public auction system follows the model established in Cameroon, it will favour financial over technical capacity, that is, those who are the most technically competent to implement long-term sustainable forest management in any one concession will not necessarily be the company to be awarded the concession (*see* Cameroon section, page 13).

Production and EU trade

Gabon is Africa's second largest timber producer after Cameroon and the world's largest supplier of Okoumé logs, which accounted for 70% of log exports in 1997.³² There are 60 wood species exploited in Gabon, but Okoumé and, to a lesser extent, Ozigo represent the bulk of production – together they account for up to 80% of total timber production in the country.³³ Estimates show that Gabon's reserves of Okoumé amount to 100 million cubic metres – about three-quarters of world reserves.³⁴

Total timber production increased from approximately 1.6 million cubic metres in 1991³⁵ to 2.5 million cubic metres in 1996.³⁶ In 1996, Okoumé production totalled 1.9 million cubic metres. These amounts are well above the level of production established by the Ministry of Water and Forests as sustainable: 2 million cubic metres in total of which 1.2 million cubic metres is Okoumé.³⁷

In 1997, total exports increased to 2.7 million cubic metres, including 1.9 million cubic metres of Okoumé.³⁸ But as a result of the Asian economic crisis and the downturn in demand for logs, exports in 1998 dropped to a total of 1.7 million cubic metres of which 1 million cubic metres were Okoumé.³⁹ 1999 saw exports increase again, reaching 2.3 million cubic metres, including 1.5 million cubic metres of Okoumé.⁴⁰

Until the mid-1990s, Europe and the countries of the Mediterranean Basin (mainly Turkey and Morocco) were the primary importers of Gabon's timber. France was the largest single

importer of Gabonese wood. Since 1993, however, Asia has progressively become the primary destination of Gabon's timber, and China has replaced France as the largest single importer.⁴¹ In 1992, 62% of Gabonese logs exports went to Europe and 12% went to Asia.⁴² In 1995, more than 40% of total exports went to Asia, mainly to China, Indonesia and South Korea. In the following year, Asia was the destination of 51% of Gabon's timber exports, whereas Europe and the countries of the Mediterranean Basin accounted for 38% of exports.⁴³ In 1998, largely because of the Asian economic crisis, Europe regained its position by a small margin as the main importer of Gabonese timber.⁴⁴

In 1999 Asia once again became the largest export market, with China accounting for a total of 906,000 cubic metres of logs, of which 835,000 cubic metres were Okoumé and Ozigo.⁴⁵ France was the second largest destination country, accounting for 521,000 cubic metres of logs exported from the country, of which 373,000 cubic metres were Okoumé and Ozigo.⁴⁶

International financial assistance

In 1999, France's AFD suspended funding of all projects in Gabon until further notice, linking its decision to Gabon's failure to service its debts.⁴⁷ Prior to this, AFD provided funding to enable French forestry companies to develop management plans. The EU's ECOFAC project continues to operate in the Lopé Reserve.

Environmental impacts

Despite the frequent assertions of the potential sustainability of Gabonese forestry, little is known about the forest eco-systems. Systematic assessments of the impact of logging on Gabon's forests have not been undertaken.⁴⁸ Production figures exceed the Ministry of Water and Forests' estimates of annual sustainable harvest levels.⁴⁹

Logging in Gabon is selective – only a few trees are cut down – but not sustainable. Logging causes on average a 10% canopy loss and up to 50% of canopy disturbance because several trees are usually damaged or destroyed in the process of reaching and felling the tree to be harvested.⁵⁰ It has been argued that, as only a small number of Okoumé trees are removed, they would easily regenerate. Recent studies, however, suggest that this is not the case and that creaming off the best trees results in lower quality timber.⁵¹ The director of SNBG recently admitted that one of the reasons for the supply of lower quality Okoumé logs to the French markets was the declining availability of high quality logs from Gabon's forests.⁵²

Commercial bushmeat hunting, which is facilitated by logging operations, has led to declining wildlife numbers throughout the region. Recent field work undertaken by the Gabonese NGO, CIAJE, found that, besides directly and indirectly increasing the levels of bushmeat hunting, logging companies operating in Gabon cause two other environmental problems: soil erosion, in particular on slopes, and pollution.⁵³ The chemicals used to treat the wood cause water pollution while the burning of unused logs increases dust particles in the air. (see CIAJE Report, pp 50-52)

Industrial logging in Gabon is also characterised by wastefulness. Companies often cut down trees which are not used; logs are burnt and abandoned along the forest trails and in the logging camps. During CIAJE's recent field work, researchers found 77 abandoned logs along one stretch of road, 47 of which had been left by FOBO, a Malaysian company, and 30 by SHM (see Interwood, page 59).⁵⁴

Erosion caused by logging



Logging concessions have been granted in the Lopé Reserve, the ECOFAC conservation project in the centre of Gabon.⁵⁵ Covering 536,000 hectares, the Lopé Reserve was created in 1946 and hosts a diverse range of species. It has ancient historical sites indicating human occupation dating back 350,000 years.⁵⁶ Inconsistent and overlapping legislation means that logging in the reserve is legal according to one law but illegal according to another. This legal contradiction, a source of tension between the various stakeholders, was resolved in July 2000 when logging companies Leroy Gabon and Rougier both relinquished logging rights in the heart of the Lopé Reserve. In return, Leroy Gabon received an Okoumé-rich area of forest on the eastern flank which was excluded from the reserve.⁵⁷

Another contested area has been the Ipassa Mingouli region near Makokou. Identified as a critical site for protection because of its high biodiversity and outstanding natural beauty, the area overlaps with logging concessions allocated to Rougier, who started logging in the area in 1994. As with the Lopé Reserve,

the company relinquished rights to part of the area and signed a “convention to declare the site known as the falls of Mingouli a protected area” on 11 February 1998 with the Gabonese government (*see* Rougier, p. 60).⁵⁸

Social impacts

Gabon’s high dependency on foreign companies and the export of natural resources makes it vulnerable to global economic fluctuations. This was exemplified by the Asian economic crisis in 1997-98 which led to layoffs in Gabon. Prior to the crisis, the number of people employed by the forestry sector had been rising from 2,750 in 1992 to 6,000 in 1997. According to SNBG, the reduced quotas led to a 65% reduction in work.⁵⁹ Between July and September 1998, Leroy Gabon sacked 140 workers who had been on temporary layoffs.⁶⁰ Some commentators believe that the 1998 crisis could have been contained among the big companies had the wood market been diversified.⁶¹ The crisis and the reduction in the workforce led to the abandonment of the logging villages, presumably increasing pressures in the cities.

Local people do not have legally recognised rights over their lands, hence companies have no formal obligations towards them. Because of resulting conflicts, companies tend to locate their operations as far as possible from villages to avoid problems.⁶² But in spite of the distances, villagers and companies cannot ignore each other completely. Logging operations have negative and positive impacts. The European companies tend to build schools and health centres for the company workers and villagers, but these are of variable quality, and some companies make promises that are not fulfilled. (*see* box page 50)

The social conditions for many logging company workers are less than ideal. Food is generally sold at very high prices, encouraging workers to turn to bushmeat hunting. The standard of workers’ accommodation is variable; in some camps, there is insufficient ventilation. In some logging areas, only higher-level managers have access to running water; the majority of the staff have to depend on rivers which are far away and whose water is not always potable due to pollution caused by the forestry operations. There is little provision for leisure activities, a problem because of the isolation of the logging areas.⁶³

The operations of the logging companies have several health impacts. Logging trucks often transport over 50 tonnes of timber, even though this volume is illegal. Road accidents are frequent. In 1998, for example, a log fell off a truck, killing one villager of Mibaka (near Lastoursville); in 1996, a similar accident also near Lastoursville killed four people and injured many others. Dust from logging operations dirties the laundry of villages near the concessions, considerably increasing women’s workload, and causes coughs in children. The services provided by health centres vary. Because of the isolation of logging camps, workers cannot easily travel to villages or cities to obtain medical services, which exacerbate the deficiencies in health centres. The health centre at the logging area of Mboumi, near Ndjole, has no medicines, for instance, not even basic painkillers such as aspirin, nor the means to deal with accidents in the processing plant.⁶⁴

Companies logging the forests of Gabon

There is a lack of transparent information about logging companies operating in Gabon,⁶⁵ including about who is operating where, which hinders attempts to evaluate their performance. It is virtually impossible to assess whether these companies are contributing to the development of the country or just taking the country’s natural resources without leaving anything positive and lasting behind. The map and data on concessionaires (*see* map page 38 and Appendix) are taken from an official 1997 Ministry map which is not freely available and is of questionable accuracy. When researchers from the US group, Global Forests Watch, tried to obtain information about companies, the government referred them to the companies and the companies referred them to the government.⁶⁶

It is known, however, that foreign capital dominates the timber sector in Gabon. Asian logging companies have now established an increasing presence in Gabon. Bordamur is owned by the Malaysian company, Rimbunan Hijau, and has been described as the largest concession holder in the country, with over one million hectares mainly in the north-west of the country.⁶⁷ Another significant Malaysian-controlled operation is FOBO. But European-owned companies remain significant concession holders, for example, Rougier (700,000 hectares), CEB-Thany (505,000 hectares), Leroy-Sonae (654,000 hectares), SHM-Interwood (estimated 300,000 hectares) and Basso Timber Industries (450,000 hectares) (*see* Part III – Company Profiles).⁶⁸

A summary of the impact of European-owned companies' forestry activities on the local populations and the environment

Report by CIAJE, Gabon

CIAJE has carried out a study on the impact of European-owned forestry companies' activities on the local population and the environment. In this study we have chosen three areas of investigation, so as to produce an overview of the problems identified. We went to the logging area of Mboumi of the SHM (Société de la Haute Mondah) in Ndjolé, in the province of Moyen Ogooué; to the wood depots of the Leroy Gabon and NSG companies at the Lopé railway station, in the province of Ogooué-Ivindo; and to the logging area of Bambidi, of CEB (Compagnie Equatoriale des Bois) in Lastourville, Ogooué-Lolo province. At these sites we carried out our investigations, talked to the workers and the local people who were directly or indirectly affected by the forestry activities. What did we find? The conclusions which follow are a summary of the results which we obtained from our investigations.

SHM workers' quarters



A. General Observations

According to the law, the land and the area of the forestry resources are the property of the State - as in decree no 192/PR/MEFCR of 4 March 1984 - the law only allows local people the right to exercise their customary activities. This expropriation of the land is not accepted by the local people, and they frequently make their views known before the forestry companies located on their territory.

It is this interpretation of the law which is often a source of conflict between the local people and the forestry companies. The latter are not obliged to meet the peoples' claims because they pay their taxes to the national treasury. It therefore falls to the State to distribute the gains from the exploitation of the forestry resources so that the people may benefit both directly and indirectly. This is currently hanging in the air due to a new law on decentralisation.

Almost all of the logging sites are far away from the villages. Where they are situated depends on the permits granted, but they have also been located so as to avoid conflict with the local people over their property rights - this is the case for the sites which we have visited. SHM's Mboumi site is situated 37 km from Ndjolé; the Gougué site of Leroy Gabon and the Mitendi site of NSG in the Lopé reserve are at a distance of 100 km and 86 km

respectively. Despite this, conflicts exist between the local people and the forestry companies, because the former are affected by the companies' activities.

B. Social Aspects

Without any formal obligation to help the local populations, the European forestry companies undertake actions on a voluntary basis. This voluntary activity is aimed at establishing their popularity among the local people and at avoiding any conflicts over property rights. Despite the law, however, the local people believe that the forestry resources belong to them.

Given the poor living conditions of the workers in the forestry companies, it was necessary to consider them as a group within the local population. Therefore in discussing the issue of the impact of the European forestry companies on the local population, we have included the local villagers and the companies' workers.

B1 - The villagers

Generally speaking, the forestry companies make some efforts with the local people living close to their sites. Without any formal obligations, they do not have to make any promises to the local people. However, following a claim made by the people of Mikongo village in Lopé, the Leroy Gabon and NSG companies decided to meet their

demands. NSG also promised to build a school, which it did. Leroy Gabon, however, promised to provide an electricity generator - this has still not been installed.

The SHM, away from Ndjolé, seems prepared to leave things as they are because the road is in an appalling state. This decay is due to the frequent traffic from the logging vehicles whose loads exceed those permitted in Gabon (50 tonnes).

Notable efforts, however, have been made by CEB. It has carried out a sociological study so that it can improve its interaction with the local people near the site. The local peoples' claims could disrupt the companies' activities. According to CEB's head of external relations, local organisations have been allowed to develop among the people. Mr Kouya stressed that these organisations would allow the local people to benefit from the exploitation of 'their forest'. This policy of humane development is summarised in the following six points:

- § the setting up of a fish breeding site at Bambidi for the local people;
- § the setting up of a villagers' logging scheme. What does this consist of? CEB has removed an area from its permit for the local people. This unit is exploited by CEB for the benefit of the local people.

This 'gift' adds Mr Kouya, helps the local people raise their standard of living;

- § the practice of sawing the wood into long planks. CEB pays someone to make these planks and these will be shared among the local people;
- § allowing local children to visit the CEB's dispensary - this is open to all of the local villagers;
- § giving jobs to young local people. Nearly all of the CEB's workers in Bambidi are from Bambidi village or other villages nearby;
- § and, building a road to link a village from the Sebe canton to Lastourville.

In addition, the Spanish forestry company BESCOS should be praised for the many activities it has taken on behalf of local people. It has made many infrastructural improvements for people in the Lambaréné area of Moyen Ogooué province.

B2 - The forestry workers

Within this category of local people, we have focused on the following in our study: access to drinking water, surroundings and living conditions, health, their hobbies, access to education for their children and access to food supplies.

Drinking water

Leroy Gabon and CEB have provided pumps for drinking water for their workers, however, workers for other forestry companies have to use streams and rivers for their drinking water. At SHM, the (office) staff have access to drinking water from a water tower, while the workers must travel over 1 km to a river which they have called 'Andza'. These workers are exposed to diseases because the water is polluted.

Surroundings and living conditions

The staff quarters are far away from those of the workers, and the staff's quarters are always better than those of the workers. At NSG, SHM and Leroy Gabon the workers' quarters are extremely basic, with no ventilation. CEB, on the other hand, has made an effort with its workers' quarters. The quarters are more spacious and it plans to build lodgings from durable materials.

Dispensary

While dispensaries exist, they are not adapted to meet the peoples' needs. In SHM, for example, the dispensary lacks medicines and several companies' dispensaries' staff are lacking in competence.

River Mboumi, SHM logging area



Hobbies

The workers are treated like semi-slaves. Nothing has been laid on for their enjoyment. CEB has a room where several games can be played and where the workers can listen to the news. A football ground is planned. There is no such provisions at NSG. At SHM, only the staff have access to TV, while the workers have neither TV, radio nor a room for recreation.

Education

Schools have been built so that workers children (and others) can be educated. Gabon Leroy appears to have the best built and the most spacious school. The textbooks are free and the teachers are paid by both the company and the government. At SHM, it's a disaster. Basically, the classes are cramped and the staff are incompetent. For the year 1998-1999 the success rate did not exceed 10 %. This has led workers to send their children to Ndjolé, 37 km away.

Access to food supplies

The companies have stores for their workers but they charge high prices. Due to these prices, the workers often resort to poaching.

C. Impact On The Environment

The impact on the environment can be seen from the pollution, the ravaging of resources and the poaching.

Erosion

Some of the areas where licences have been granted have seen exploitation of the slopes, such as Mboumi at SHM. This type of exploitation leads to soil erosion. Erosion is further encouraged when the soil becomes compacted and with the damage caused by large vehicles.

Pollution

Water pollution has taken place. The product which is used to treat the wood can be found in the water. This is because the wood is transported to the port of Port-Gentil on the river Ogooué. The Ogooué river is also used by the local people to wash in and for drinking water.

Ravaging of resources

Many things show that the forests of Gabon are being exploited in an anarchic manner, and that conservation consideration or practices are not being followed. Logging companies engage in mining the forest instead of managing their source of raw materials.

Many of the blocks of wood are burnt, others are abandoned. We have seen 7 such blocks from the CEB and 30 from the SHM along the road. We are not taking all of the wood abandoned into account, such as the boards, planks or panels that we saw on site. Why is there so much wastage? The wastage continues with the building of the depots in the middle of the forest. Several sites are developed, sometimes close to each other, this leads to loss of vegetative cover. These plants are further damaged with the development of tracks in the forest and - worse still - roads. SHM's roads have a width of 3-4 m, it's a real mess at Rougier-Gabon. A road can become 25 m wide.

Poaching

Almost all of the forestry workers poach. Most companies have never considered this to be a problem in their management of their sites. However, considerable efforts are being made by some companies such as Leroy, CEB and BESCOS, which run awareness campaigns, and whose workers face penalties for poaching.

The other side of the problem is that some forestry companies like Rougier favour poaching. This is not done directly but poachers use their sites and there are no surveillance measures in place to stop this environmental problem.

Many blocks of wood are burnt, others are abandoned



Part III

Company Profiles

THE EU PARENT COMPANIES profiled in this section have been selected because they all control large areas of forest in Central Africa. Not all are exclusively or even primarily timber companies; they are, however, all involved in processing logs into value-added wood products, although for many their primary processing facilities are in Europe. Recent moves by the producing countries to increase investment in downstream processing has meant that many of the companies are only now making serious investments in such facilities in the countries where they log. Table 1 on page 11 summarises the EU companies and their Central African operations. The maps on pages 34-39 and the corresponding data tables in the Appendix indicate as far as is known the location of companies' concessions. The information in the report is mainly taken from published reports and articles, official sources and field visits. Each company profile presents a brief overview of the parent company, followed by a description of the forestry-related operations in each Central African country where they operate. Every effort has been made to verify the information included in the report but data is often difficult to obtain or contradictory. We would welcome corrections and updates and also details about EU parent companies whose operations are not included in the report.

ALPI

Alpi Spa is one of Italy's leading timber companies. It specialises in the production of wood-based panels and has a substantial presence in the timber industries of Cameroon and the Ivory Coast.¹ Alpi's sales turnover for 1998 was US\$120 million compared to US\$ 69 million in 1996. Although it is listed on the Milan Stock Exchange, the company is largely controlled by the Alpi family.²

Cameroon

Alpi has been logging in Cameroon for over 20 years and operates through two subsidiaries, Alpicam and Grumcam (see below). The company's primary interests are veneer and plywood,³ and its processing facilities at Bonabéri, near Douala, are the largest and among the best equipped in Cameroon. During the season 1996-7, Alpi subsidiaries produced 202,000 cubic metres of logs, of which 61,000 cubic metres were exported.⁴ According to unpublished official statistics, the company exported approximately 10,000 cubic metres per year of plywood and 30,000 cubic metres per year of veneer sheet in the late 1990s.⁵

Alpi appears committed to retaining a major timber business in Cameroon, particularly as a timber processor, but also as a logging company. It is expanding still further its large processing facilities at Bonabéri⁶ and has recently been awarded a large new concession, bringing its total

concessions to over 214,261 hectares. It also buys logs from third parties to supply its processing facilities.⁷

During the early 1990s, a consultancy report for the International Tropical Timber Organisation found that forest management in the concessions of Alpicam and Grumcam was unsustainable, partly as a consequence of the then forestry law.⁸ As with most operators in Cameroon, the group's commitment to implementing sustainable forest management remains unproven.

Alpicam

Alpicam's processing facilities at Bonabéri have an input capacity of 120,000 cubic metres per year.⁹ In July 2000, the company was awarded a new concession (UFA 10-026),¹⁰ which consists of 128,449 hectares in the East Province.¹¹

Grumcam

Alpi acquired Grumcam from the German company, Danzer (see Danzer, page 55) in 1992.¹² Through Grumcam, Alpi has processing facilities near Mindourou in the Kadey district of the East Province. This facility has a processing capacity of 47,000 cubic metres per year.¹³ Grumcam has one current concession (UFA 10-051) of 85,812 hectares which was awarded in 1997. The company plans to log two sub-divisions of the UFA, known as *assiettes de coupe*, until June 2001, half the amount foreseen by the forestry law.¹⁴ In December 1999, a field inspection by the ministry responsible for forests (MINEF) in the East Province noted that Grumcam should be congratulated for being the only company inspected which was managing its operations in accordance with the forestry law.¹⁵ Although the inspection report is unclear in its findings, the MINEF team recommended that the company be exceptionally awarded an additional *assiette de coupe* so that its operations did not become illegal.¹⁶ The team also noted that Grumcam had not elaborated its first management plans, although the parent company states that its plans are ready and have been awaiting approval for over a year.¹⁷

BASSO

Basso Legnami Srl is a small, family-owned Italian timber company. The company has 40 employees in Italy and sales turnover for 1999 was 10 million euro (US\$ 8.5 million). Its main markets are the EU and USA, and it specialises in logs, lumber and parquet flooring.¹⁸

Gabon

Basso Timber Industries Gabon (BTIG)

Basso has a logging and processing operation in Gabon called Basso Timber Industries Gabon (BTIG). BTIG has 484 employees and its turnover in 1999 was 9 million euro (US\$ 7.7 million).¹⁹ The company has concessions totalling 450,000 hectares and has log processing capacity of 80,000 cubic metres per year.²⁰ It specialises in logs, sawn wood and veneer and plans to establish plywood, laminated products, parquet and electricity projects in the country.²¹

Basso used to have links with Compagnie Forestière du Gabon (CFG),²² a part Gabon-owned forestry company, but has now broken the relationship.²³

BOLLORÉ

The Bolloré Group is a French conglomerate quoted on the Paris Stock Exchange. Bolloré Investissement (formerly Albatros Investissement) is the parent company of the Bolloré Group, and Vincent Bolloré is the President and Director General of both companies.²⁴ The Bolloré Group is a powerful force in Africa with wide interests, including freight transportation, timber, agro-industry, and the production and marketing of cigarettes. Through its acquisition of strategic industries over the past ten years, the group has become the number two French-African conglomerate (after oil company Elf-Total) and is linked at high levels to French political interests in the region.²⁵

Non-timber interests in Africa

Some 65% of Bolloré's turnover is derived from transportation.²⁶ Its principal companies in this sector are Saga and SDV (Scac Delmas Vieljeux). Both are leaders in transportation and freight handling, particularly between Africa and Europe, Africa and Asia (timber is a major cargo on these routes)²⁷ and within Africa itself. Bolloré's grip on shipping and overland transport in Africa will become stronger as a result of acquiring the UK company OT Africa Line,²⁸ a leader in the shipping of timber from West and Central Africa primarily to Europe but also to East Asia and the USA. Bolloré also owns Bolmet Inc. in the USA.²⁹ Bolloré is responsible for running the railways in Cameroon and Congo (Brazzaville) and the railway between Abidjan in the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso. In CAR, it manages the port of Bangui.³⁰

Bolloré's agro-industrial interests are concentrated in its subsidiary, Rivaud. They include palm oil, tobacco, rubber, coffee and cocoa, primarily in Africa (particularly Cameroon) and South-East Asia. Through Rivaud, which owns French hardwood distributor GIPAT, Bolloré is interested in buying the recently privatised Socopal (a former palm oil parastatal) in Cameroon.

The links between transport and timber

The synergies between Bolloré's various interests in Africa, and the opportunities afforded by a dominant presence in the region, are exemplified by the group's interests in transport and logging. In 1998, as part of a US\$ 90 million World Bank-mandated privatisation and investment scheme of the railway in Cameroon – the Bank lent US\$ 15 million – the operation of the railway was conceded to Bolloré's transportation subsidiary, Saga. The railway, Camrail, derives much of its revenue from the transport of logs. Another Bolloré subsidiary, the logging company HFC (Forestière de Campo), *see* below, received a contract for supply of timber to the railway in June 2000.³¹ Links between the supply of timber to the railway, World Bank funding and Bolloré's timber companies have all been a source of concern.³² An agreement between Camrail and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to address the transportation of illegal bushmeat by rail has not yet been concluded.³³

Bolloré also owns a majority share in another former Cameroonian parastatal SEPBC (Société d'Exploitation des Parcs à Bois du Cameroun), which runs the main dockyard in Douala, through which over 90% of Cameroon's official timber exports pass,³⁴ and the port in Kribi, from which timber is also exported and which has recently been expanded to cater for an increase in timber shipments.

The Bolloré group is active in the timber trade in the CAR through warehousing and transport operations, shipping timber from Bangui to Brazzaville and Pointe Noire in neighbouring Congo (Brazzaville).³⁵

The Bolloré group is involved in running the Congo-Océan railway from Brazzaville to Pointe Noire in Congo (Brazzaville), a traditional transport route for timber.³⁶ The railway is not only the economic axis of the country, but also of immense strategic significance in the civil war.³⁷ Through its interests in the country, the Bolloré group supports the camp of President Sassou Nguesso to a high level.³⁸

In Gabon, one of Bolloré's principal transportation companies, SDV, owns a majority in the former Gabonese parastatal shipping line, Sonatram (Société Nationale des Transports Maritime).³⁹ Bolloré manages timber handling activities at Gabon's four timber ports through the company SEPBG.⁴⁰

Cameroon

During the early 1990s, Bolloré acquired subsidiaries which in turn owned two timber companies in Cameroon: HFC (Forestière de Campo), whose concessions are in the south-west, and SIBAF (Société Industrielle des Bois Africains), whose concessions are in the south-east (*see* below).⁴¹ Bolloré arranged for international journalists to visit SIBAF and HFC logging sites during the 1999 Yaoundé Forest Summit promoted by WWF.⁴² Bolloré is discussing sustainable forest management with WWF and Tropenbos (the Dutch tropical forest research programme) and has recently decided to pursue Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification for both HFC and SIBAF concessions.⁴³ If it does obtain FSC certification, the group will have made considerable progress in addressing some of the serious legal, environmental and social issues associated with current forest management practices in Cameroon.

HFC (Forestière de Campo)

HFC operates in the South Province and currently holds a total of 162,790 hectares under concession in and around the Réserve de Campo and Campo Ma'an protected areas. It has two concessions: UFA 09-024 (76,002 hectares), awarded in July 2000, and UFA 09-025 (86,788 hectares).

HFC produced 169,000 cubic metres of logs in 1996-7 of which 82,000 cubic metres were exported.⁴⁴ It has a sawmill at Campo with an annual input capacity of 60,000 cubic metres.⁴⁵ Its principal timber species is Azobé. According to the company, its maximum annual production is usually 120,000 cubic metres of logs and 15,000 cubic metres of sawn timber.⁴⁶

Most of the company's exports leave from Campo bay direct and accounted for around 5% of Cameroon's official timber exports in 1995-6.⁴⁷ For decades, HFC has been the only concessionaire of any consequence around Campo and so the town is entirely dependent on HFC's continued operations for its survival. Therefore, unless HFC is committed to long-term sustainable forest management in the area, Campo



could collapse once the logging “boom” has finished, as other logging towns have done. In one recorded incident, HFC earned a bad reputation locally when its promise of improved transportation for the villagers of Nazareth and N’Koélon came to nothing.⁴⁸

SIBAF (*Société Industrielle des Bois Africains*)

SIBAF currently has control of two concessions in the East Province, totalling 134,765 hectares; UFA 10-063 (68,933 hectares) awarded in July 2000 and UFA 10-018 (65,832 hectares). These concessions are in biologically and culturally important primary forests, close to the company’s earlier concession at Kika, which is now part of the Lobéké protected area.⁴⁹ The company produced 162,000 cubic metres of logs in Boumba Ngoko district during 1996-7, of which it exported 46,000 cubic metres.⁵⁰ SIBAF’s sawmill at Kika has an input capacity of 60,000 cubic metres.⁵¹ The main species harvested is Ayous. As with HFC, the company’s usual maximum production is around 120,000 cubic metres of logs and 15,000 cubic metres of sawn timber.⁵² In March 2000, SIBAF was fined CFA Fr 6 million (US\$ 7,799) for unclear marking of logs.⁵³

The economy of Kika, a small village of only 25 people ten years ago, but now a town of around 6,000, has developed as a direct result of SIBAF’s operations.⁵⁴ Many of the townspeople were brought to the area by the company from other parts of the country. The influx has added to the disruption of the Baka and Bangando people whose traditional territories are in this part of the forest.⁵⁵ The construction of forestry roads and the subsequent traffic facilitated the hunting of bushmeat, while the population increase as Kika expanded provided a market for it.⁵⁶ A joint survey by the Cameroonian ministry responsible for forests, MINEF, and the German government development agency, GTZ, in 1999 of firearms in the East Province found 146 illegal firearms originating from Congo (Brazzaville) in the SIBAF concession area,⁵⁷ weapons which pose a threat to local peoples’ security as well as to the wildlife, such as elephants and lowland gorillas.

The near-exhaustion of SIBAF’s former concessions left the town in 1999 facing collapse, dependent on SIBAF being awarded new concessions.^{58,59} That year, half the population left after operations wound down and workers were laid off.⁶⁰ SIBAF has since been awarded two concessions in the area, and believes that, with new laws and forest management practices, the concessions should not become exhausted in the future, thus offering greater security of employment.⁶¹

Central African Republic (CAR)

SESAM (*Société d’Exploitation Forestière de la Sangha-Mbaéré*), one of the largest logging concessions in CAR, used to be owned by Bolloré’s subsidiary, Saga. In the early 1990s, SESAM drew on a large loan (in effect, a subsidy) from the French government to prepare a forest management plan,⁶² but as it did not have sufficient in-house capacity, the work was in fact prepared by the French government. It is not known whether the plan accommodates, or indeed was ever intended to accommodate, the needs of the settled and nomadic forest people. SESAM has two concessions in CAR, one of 107,000 hectares awarded in 1991, the other of 307,000 hectares awarded in 1995, in a region where many Pygmies live.⁶³ Since Malaysian logging company WTK⁶⁴

bought 51% of SESAM⁶⁵ in the mid-1990s, it is not clear whether this management plan is being implemented or not, although there remains a French interest in SESAM.

Bolloré used to operate in CAR through EFBACA (*Entreprise Forestière des Bois Africains Centrafrique*), a subsidiary of the group’s principal logging company in the Ivory Coast. It had a 200,000 hectare concession in Sangha province.⁶⁶ The current status and ownership of EFBACA is not known.

BRUYNZEEL

Bruynzeel is a Dutch group which specialises in the production of wood-based panels, mainly Okoumé plywood, through its Bruynzeel Multipanel division and of kitchen furniture through Bruynzeel Keukens en Kastén. The company trades in the UK as Bruynzeel Multipanel (UK) Ltd, in Belgium as Bruynzeel Multipanel NV and in Germany as Bruynzeel Multipanel GmbH.

Congo (Brazzaville)

Boplac

During the 1980s, Bruynzeel jointly owned the company Placongo, with the Dutch government (through FMO, the Dutch government development agency) and the Congo government. Placongo was restructured and renamed as Boplac in 1990.⁶⁷ The equity of the new company is held by Bruynzeel (43.5%), the Danish company DLH Nordisk (43.5%) (*see* page 56) and the German trading company M & P Pruchtnow (13%).⁶⁸

During 1997, Boplac produced 43,000 cubic metres of logs from its five concessions which total 500,000 hectares in the Lékoumou region in the south of the country.⁶⁹ Most of this was Okoumé. Boplac is the leading veneer producer in Congo and in 1997 output was 23,000 cubic metres.⁷⁰ Because of the political difficulties of operating in Congo (Brazzaville), the operation declared a loss in 1998.⁷¹

Gabon

During 1999, Boplac imported logs into Congo (Brazzaville) from neighbouring Gabon to sustain throughput at its veneer facility, which could not obtain sufficient supplies from within the country because of militia activity.⁷²

DANZER

The Danzer Group, now a global timber business, is primarily a German operation, held through a Swiss holding company, ANBE.⁷³ Group sales turnover for 1998 was DM 900 million (US\$ 392 million).⁷⁴ Danzer, one of the world’s leading manufacturers and suppliers of veneers, producing around 150 million square metres per year in the early 1990s.⁷⁵ Less than 10% of the group’s sales, however, are derived from tropical timbers. Most of the tropical timber used in their veneers is from African species, with a limited amount from Asian logs and none from Latin America.⁷⁶

Danzer’s principal operations in the European Union are in Germany (notably Danzer Funierwerke, based in Reutlingen), Austria (Karl Danzer GmbH), Belgium (Coplac), France (Jura Placages), Sweden (Fanérimporten),

and the UK (Karl Danzer Ltd).^{77,78} Danzer's Swiss business is conducted through Interholco.⁷⁹ Its subsidiaries, such as Coplac in Belgium, are believed to buy timber from a number of different sources outside the group.

Danzer also has forestry operations in West and Central Africa. The West African operations are primarily through SIFCI (Société Industrielle et Forestière de Côte d'Ivoire) in the Ivory Coast.⁸⁰

Cameroon

Danzer sold its interest in its main subsidiary in Cameroon, Grumcam, in 1992. Italian company Alpi now has a majority share in it (see Alpi, page 53).

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

SIFORCO (Société Industrielle et Forestière du Congo)

Danzer's principal operating company in the DRC is SIFORCO, known during the Mobutu era as Siforzal (Société Industrielle et Forestière Zaïre-Allemande).⁸¹ In the early 1990s, the company accounted for 40% of the country's commercial production of logs (then totalling 500,000 cubic metres per year)⁸² and roughly half the country's annual timber exports of 200,000 cubic metres.⁸³ It produces the majority of the country's veneer exports, most of which is of Sapelli. SIFORCO's production in 1996 and 1997 dropped to 140,000 cubic metres of logs per year and still further during 1998 to 105,000 cubic metres. The company has currently ceased logging in DRC because of renewed fighting in the region.

The German government's investment and development institution, DEG, has a 33% stake in SIFORCO (DM15.5 million / US\$6.8 million).⁸⁴ DEG's role, as an arm of the German Development Ministry BMZ, is to implement government development policy. Its stake in a forestry company raises questions as to whether DEG actively encourages Danzer to implement sustainable forest management or not. DEG states that it does promote aspects of sustainable forestry in their ongoing co-operation with Danzer.⁸⁵

SIFORCO has two processing facilities in DRC, the newer one at Bumba and the other at Maluku near the capital, Kinshasa, at the end of the navigable reaches of the Congo River.⁸⁶ Danzer also has a transport subsidiary, Cotraco,^{87, 88} and has therefore been able to operate independently of the vagaries of the state-owned river transport and freight handling company, ONATRA.

Since 1983, SIFORCO has had access to nine concessions in DRC totalling 2.9 million hectares; 60% is in Equateur Province near Bongondanga and Bumba and the rest in the province of Orientale, near Aketi. SIFORCO's largest concession (K9) is believed to be of one million hectares between Bumba and Basoko on the northern bank of the Congo river near Lokoko.

Danzer presents itself as a responsible company, stating: "We try not to see ecology and economy as conflicting forces" and "Our success has always allowed us to take on social responsibilities".⁸⁹ There has, however, been no independent social and environmental audit of the group's operations which would verify these claims. Evidence from the ground, such as it is, suggests a rather more complex picture of impacts. Criticisms from conservationists prompted the company recently to attempt to control some of the environmental impacts of its operations, particularly with regard to the commercial hunting of bushmeat (see below).

A 1998 investigation by a conservationist of SIFORCO operations in the Mentole concession on the southern bank of the Congo River revealed social and environmental problems. Local people refuted company claims that it gave supplies of millet, rice and manioc to its employees. The company also claimed to provide free medical care to employees and their families and free schooling to children, but the dispensary was staffed by a nurse only, no doctor was available, and parents paid for schooling, employing the teacher through a co-operative.⁹⁰

As to environmental sustainability, Danzer's logging operations have led directly and indirectly to a decline in the numbers of bonobo, a rare and endangered species of primate unique to the DRC which is present in viable populations primarily in the vicinity of the Lomako and Yekokora rivers.^{91,92} At least one of the company's concessions is near a forest which used to contain high densities of bonobo.⁹³ The bonobo population is estimated to number between 10,000 to 25,000 animals. Danzer sought to pre-empt the efforts of local conservationists by procuring in advance a substantial area of forest south of Bumba which the conservationists wanted to be legally protected.⁹⁴ Although in 1989 Danzer returned 821,000 hectares between the Lomako and Yekokora rivers to the government, the company nevertheless continued to log in this area.⁹⁵

The 1998 investigations found that logging crews in one of the company's concession areas transported bushmeat hunters into the forest and that company employees used company facilities and transport to facilitate the hunting and trade in bushmeat.⁹⁶ As a result of these investigations, Danzer has taken steps to reduce its facilitation of the bushmeat trade by ordering employees to halt their involvement. The company has also set up environmental education programmes for its employees, with the help of conservation organisations, to raise awareness locally of the problems caused by unsustainable and illegal wildlife hunting.⁹⁷ The company is also involved in initiatives at the international level regarding bushmeat.

Congo (Brazzaville)

IFO (Industrie Forestière d'Ouessou)

Danzer has a subsidiary in northern Congo (Brazzaville) called IFO (Industrie Forestière d'Ouessou).⁹⁸

SCBO

In August 1999, Danzer bought the former parastatal known as SCBO from the Congolese government. This deal included a saw and veneer mill in the north of the country and the UFA Est concession of 1.3 million hectares connected to the mill. Danzer is currently refurbishing the mill, which was non-operational and in bad condition, and production was planned to start in Autumn 2000. Danzer is also preparing a management plan for the concession.⁹⁹

DLH NORDISK

DLH Nordisk A/S, part of the Dalhoff, Larsen and Horneman (DLH) group, is a Danish shipping and timber company. In January 2000, the company acquired EAC Timber Ltd to form one of the world's largest independent timber trading companies.¹⁰⁰

DLH Nordisk obtains timber from Africa, Eastern Europe and South America. EAC acquires it particularly from East Asia, but also from Africa and South America. The sales turnovers of the timber businesses of DLH and EAC were each approximately DKr 1 billion (US\$ 114 million) in 1998. In 1999, gross profit for the DLH group was D Kr 538 million (US\$ 61 million). The group has sales subsidiaries in Belgium (Indufor), France (Indubois and Nordisk Bois), The Netherlands (Indufor), the UK (DLH Timber) and the USA (DLH Nordisk).¹⁰¹

The enlarged DLH Nordisk company's interests in Central Africa include offices in Cameroon, Congo (Brazzaville) and Gabon.¹⁰² It buys timber from exporters in the region, rather than exporting itself. DLH Nordisk is seeking to expand its sales of timber purchased from this region.¹⁰³

DLH's environmental policy claims that the company aims to trade in wood and wood-based products which have been sustainably produced and, "*at the very minimum, the products of DLH comply with statutory requirements, including the provisions of environmental law*".¹⁰⁴ The company states that it is committed to FSC certification standards, both in its own operations, for example in Brazil and Ghana, and for its suppliers. The group provides assistance to suppliers in Brazil, Poland and Russia to obtain FSC certification.¹⁰⁵ But given recent revelations of large-scale and widespread illegal practices in the forestry sector in Cameroon in particular, and the lack of forest law enforcement in the Congo Basin region more generally, the group's current timber purchases from Central Africa cannot be proven to come from legally-produced sources; the company faces an uphill struggle to raise standards of forestry operations in Central Africa, where it operates as a purchaser of timber and as a forest manager.

Cameroon and CAR

In May 2000, DLH opened a purchasing office in Douala to cover the CAR and Cameroon. The office is buying on an FOB basis "from the most reliable exporters" and aims to increase DLH's turnover of hardwood from the Central African region.¹⁰⁶

Congo (Brazzaville)

DLH Nordisk SARL operates a small office in the Congolese town of Pointe Noire for the procurement of hardwood logs, sawn timber and veneers for the European, North American and Asian markets.¹⁰⁷ The civil war in Congo (Brazzaville), however, has adversely affected operations. The Danish management were withdrawn from the country, the Danish manager moved to the new Douala office, and in July 2000 the business was being run by one local employee.¹⁰⁸

Boplac

DLH Nordisk holds 43.5% of Boplac (*see Bruynzeel section, page 55*) but because of the political difficulties of operating in Congo (Brazzaville), the operation declared a loss in 1998.¹⁰⁹ Because militia activity in Congo prevented logging, Boplac imported logs from the neighbouring country of Gabon during 1999 in order to sustain throughput at its veneer facility.¹¹⁰

Gabon

DLH Nordisk has an office in Libreville for the procurement of hardwood logs for Europe and Asia.¹¹¹

FELDMEYER

Hinrich Feldmeyer GmbH & Co is based in Germany.¹¹² Internationally, Feldmeyer works as a producer and trader of tropical timber from Africa (as HIF) primarily in association with tt Timber International (a Swiss company), but also with tt Tropical Timber based at the port of La Rochelle in France and Tropisch Hout Nederland of the Netherlands.

Cameroon

Feldmeyer used to operate as CIFOA (Compagnie Industrielle et Forestière de l'Ouest Africaine), a logging company whose average annual output during the late 1980s was 70,000 cubic metres of logs and 15,000 cubic metres of sawn wood.¹¹³ CIFOA harvested one tree per hectare in a felling cycle of over 25 years.¹¹⁴ The company was sold in 1988. Feldmeyer recently established a timber transit and supplies trading company, SAT (Société d'Approvisionnement et de Transit), in Douala.¹¹⁵

Congo

CIB (Congolaise Industrielle du Bois)

Feldmeyer's subsidiary in Congo is CIB, headquartered in Ouessou.¹¹⁶ Feldmeyer has a majority interest in CIB, which was created in 1968, and tt Timber International has a minority interest.¹¹⁷ The company has been the only commercially successful operation in the north of the country on a consistent basis.¹¹⁸

CIB has three concessions in the north of the country, totalling 1.15 million hectares - Pokola, which is its main base (480,000ha), Kabo (280,000ha) and Loundougou (390,000ha), the latter being held in reserve for future exploitation.¹¹⁹ The concessions are located in primary rainforest of high biodiversity. The area has a rich cultural heritage, being home to a relatively large number of forest hunter-gatherers, such as the Mbendjele and Baka, as well as many farming and fishing, Bantu and Ubangian language speaking sedentary ethnic groups, notably the Sangha Sangha, Bongili, Kabounga, Pomo and Kaka.

Annual production is currently 250,000 cubic metres, with around 60% being processed in two sawmills at Kabo and Pakola.¹²⁰ The company exports about 100,000 cubic metres of logs and 40,000 cubic metres of sawn timber each year.¹²¹ The two main species harvested are Sapelli and Sipo.¹²²

CIB used to float its logs down to Brazzaville and then send them to Pointe Noire by railway. This route has



become so unreliable (due to civil war and problems with the run-down railway) that CIB has been obliged to construct a 150 kilometre road from Pokola to connect to the Cameroon road network, so it can send its logs by road through Cameroon for export from the Cameroonian port of Douala.¹²³ This has enabled CIB to maintain production, even during the recent civil war, unlike other European operators in the country (*see* Congo (Brazzaville), page 27). The road also, however, facilitated the commercial bushmeat trade in the area.¹²⁴

CIB is reported to be well regarded by most local people. There is some resentment among certain local groups who feel their traditional heritage is being exploited without adequate redistribution of the benefits. Yet the CIB is also perceived of as the local agent of development and provider of basic services,¹²⁵ which the government has had difficulty doing. Its employment and living conditions are reported to be good and it operates within the law.¹²⁶ The concessions are adjacent to the Nouabalé Ndoki National Park and are home to a substantial Pygmy population – a number of whom work for CIB rather than Bantu villagers.¹²⁷ The very success of CIB's venture has attracted newcomers to the locality and Pokola has grown from a small fishing village of 120 in 1972 to one of the largest centres in north Congo, with a population of around 8,000.¹²⁸ The increased activities in the area have significantly increased pressure on natural resources and, according to a World Bank study, wildlife has been largely decimated in a 20 kilometre band around Pokola.¹²⁹

The company is considered to be one of the more economically sustainable and well-managed operations in the Central African region.¹³⁰ However, CIB's operations have not been without criticism. The facilities provided in Pokola are of a high quality but are provided by the company primarily for employees based in the town – other local people have varying degrees of access to them.¹³¹ Additionally, the provision of services attracts outsiders to come and settle in Pokola, at least temporarily, in order to benefit from the service provided. This increases the demand for food from the forest areas around Pokola. A study conducted by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) in 1996 found that traditional tenure, resource access rights and resource management systems, particularly those of the Pygmies, were rapidly breaking down within the Pokola concession. Also, commercial bushmeat hunting was being indirectly facilitated by the company's operations, with common reports of CIB trucks and drivers transporting bushmeat.¹³² The study noted that the company had no forest management plan nor did it conduct post-harvest inventories. In response to this, the company asserted that forest management plans in the modern sense do not yet exist in West and Central Africa, and thus this could not be considered to be a failure on the part of CIB.¹³³ CIB acknowledged the usefulness of the report's assessment of the company's operations against sustainable forest management standards established by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO).¹³⁴ The study found that of 53 criteria for sustainable forest management, CIB met only 34 in part or whole and 16 were not met at all.¹³⁵ According to the company, actions for further improvements were started immediately.¹³⁶

The company has great influence in the area and does not welcome potential critics. It invited selected international conservationists to visit the pilot projects in

1999, as long as the company approved the composition of the visitors. To date this visit has not taken place.¹³⁷ In 1996, the company was reported to have used its influence to prevent a potential critic from visiting its concession area.¹³⁸

Recent field missions to the CIB concessions by the international environmental NGO World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) found that the company still has some way to go to demonstrate its commitment to achieving sustainable forest management to FSC standards.¹³⁹ The company takes only the very best trees, about one per hectare, but there is considerable damage to surrounding forest. CIB was urged to take measures to conserve Sapelli because of regeneration problems likely to occur following the removal of the best trees in this way. WWF also expressed concern at the amount of forest opened up, the company driving roads into relatively large areas to extract a small number of target trees. The field mission reported that not enough effort was being made by the company to valorise other timber species. WWF complemented the company, however, on its professional harvesting techniques and technical capacity to improve its operations further and praised the collaboration with WCS regarding bushmeat hunting.¹⁴⁰

CIB has received positive attention over recent years for its activities regarding the commercial bushmeat issue, particularly a joint initiative with the US-based NGO Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) (*see* below). The company has taken steps to discourage bushmeat hunting and to prevent the commercial exploitation of bushmeat in its concessions. It has established an education programme for local people and issued instructions to its workers not to illegally hunt endangered species. A "Protocole d'Accord" was signed in December 1995 to this effect by members of the local communities of Pokola and Ndoki and by CIB.

A partnership agreement between CIB, WCS and the Ministry of Forest Economy (MEF) was signed in June 1999, consolidating work to establish CIB's forest management units as buffer zones to the Nouabalé Ndoki National Park and to reduce the levels of bushmeat hunting in the concession areas.¹⁴¹ The park is being managed by WCS and is considered to be of considerable importance because of its high biodiversity. In the two pilot areas, WCS claim that bushmeat hunting has declined by 60%.¹⁴² However, recent evidence in the nearby community of Pokola, which is the largest timber-based settlement in the area, suggests that hunters may have simply switched their activities to other parts of the forest.¹⁴³

CIB is actively pursuing certification and argues that to achieve a sustainable cut they require a large concession area. Thus they now have three concessions totalling over one million hectares and are undertaking an extensive survey of the flora in the concessions in collaboration with WCS. The social aspects of sustainability may prove more of a challenge to the company, such as offering compensation to local people for lost non-timber forest products, involving local people in management and decision-making and securing local land rights. WCS and CIB are sceptical that local communities have the capacity to manage resources responsibly.¹⁴⁴ Partly in consequence of this belief, WCS employ eco-guards armed with automatic rifles to patrol the buffer zone and logging roads around the national park. This is very unpopular with local people who see this as a gross violation of their traditional rights.¹⁴⁵

In some cases, important elephant poachers are made eco-guards in an attempt to take them out of the poaching circuit. It has been reported in the past that these guards often intimidated local people, and allowed their former poaching colleagues to pass freely through checkpoints but confiscated local people's small amounts of game. The system has created distrust and antagonism between some conservation workers and local people and, in certain places, may have strengthened the position of some of the best-connected poachers who are commissioned to hunt trophy animals.¹⁴⁶ If these issues are not tackled in an open and transparent manner, based on input from local people, this potentially positive initiative may not bear the fruit it should.

Accepting the contributions that CIB has made to the provision of local services, and its partnership approach with WCS regarding bushmeat hunting, it appears that the company still has some way to go before obtaining independent proof of sustainable forest management. Whilst the company may be better than many other timber companies in the region, the woeful records of many of these other operators does not provide an acceptable base to which companies genuinely striving to achieve sustainable forest management should compare themselves. Independent audit and verification of the environmental and social benefits and impacts of the joint CIB/WCS initiative and CIB's operations by experts acceptable to all parties would seem to be an appropriate next step prior to further judgements being made on the merits or shortcomings of the operations.

INTERWOOD

Groupe Interwood SA is a French company which was until recently a subsidiary of the French conglomerate Pinault Printemps Redoute.¹⁴⁷ The principal owners are now listed as DF Synergies (40%), Siti Ste D'Investissements et de Transactions (40%) and Mr Gueit (19%).¹⁴⁸ The turnover figures for the company at the end 1999 were US\$ 28,808,000.¹⁴⁹ Interwood has operations in Cameroon and Gabon.

Cameroon

Interwood Cameroun SARL

Interwood's company in Cameroon is Interwood Cameroun SARL which carries out logging, processing and international trade in logs and sawn timber.¹⁵⁰ According to 1999 French press reports, Interwood's logging permit was renewed by the Minister of Forests and it was being approached by BOTAC (a Cameroonian forestry company) concerning a possible partnership.¹⁵¹ It is not clear which concessions Interwood Cameroun SARL holds.

Coron

Interwood has recently acquired EGTF RC Coron's interests in Cameroon.¹⁵² Coron has been operating in Cameroon since 1938. Until its acquisition by Interwood, it was a family-owned company with close links to the French establishment – its Managing Director represented French interests in Cameroon.¹⁵³ Since Interwood's recent acquisition of Coron, however, the new management structure is unknown.



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Coron currently holds two concessions (UFAs 08-001 and 08-002) totalling 136,760 hectares in Haute Sanaga district, Centre Province. It has processing facilities of 48,000 cubic metres input capacity. In 1996-7, it produced 40,677 cubic metres of logs of which 20,131 cubic metres were exported.¹⁵⁴ Coron exports timber (from logs to semi-finished manufactured items) primarily to Europe, both in its own right and through traders, most notably a French expatriate company, FCA (Forestiers Camerounais Associés).¹⁵⁵

Coron acquired its concessions in 1996 through a Presidential Decree (*"gré à gré"*) rather than by auction, as required by the 1994 law, and has a contract which does not envisage a management plan nor a probationary period.¹⁵⁶ Obtaining a licence in this way means that companies do not have to abide by the 1994 law.¹⁵⁷ The World Bank has requested the Cameroonian government to revoke all contracts for concessions that had been granted in a manner contrary to the 1994 law, but to no avail.

In December 2000, Coron was fined CFA fr 16,783,308 (US\$ 21,815) for exploiting unauthorised species.¹⁵⁸

Gabon

Société de la Haute Mondah (SHM)

Interwood owns Société de la Haute Mondah (SHM) in Gabon, one of the largest operators in the country.¹⁵⁹ The company is believed to own around 300,000 hectares of concessions. A field trip in June 2000 by the Gabonese NGO CIAJE to the SHM site at Mboumi found that the managers had potable water from a specially constructed water tower but the workers had to walk more than one kilometre to a river polluted with wood treatment chemicals. *"In effect, this river is a rubbish dump or dustbin for wood residues and other detritus"*, concluded the investigation.¹⁶⁰ Workers' camps were poorly constructed and vulnerable to precipitation and subsidence.¹⁶¹ Field investigations found that the dispensary at the Mboumi site had no medication at all, not even basic painkillers, and a lack of qualified staff and basic facilities.¹⁶² Education provision is described in the field report as *"a catastrophe"*, with incompetent staff. In 1998-9, the success rate at the school was less than 10%. As a result, workers send their children to school in Ndjolé nearly 40 kilometres away.¹⁶³ The field visit report also noted damage caused by heavy machinery, soil erosion on slopes, and excessive timber wastage.

PASQUET

Pasquet is a building materials manufacturer based in France (annual sales US\$ 40 million).¹⁶⁴ It has control over some of its raw material supplies through R. Pallisco, its logging subsidiary in Cameroon. It is known particularly for its range of hardwood doors and windows.¹⁶⁵ Pasquet's principal raw material is Moabi,¹⁶⁶ a species that has traditionally held great value to local people (see The Moabi issue, page 6).

Cameroon

R. Pallisco

Pasquet's subsidiary in Cameroon, R. Pallisco, on its own or through associates, notably SABE, has held concessions covering over 700,000 ha in the East Province since it started logging in 1972.¹⁶⁷ Pallisco and SABE produced a total of 79,287 cubic metres of logs of which 35,892 cubic metres were exported during 1996-7.¹⁶⁸ Pallisco has a sawmill at Massaména with input capacity of 45,000 cubic metres per year.¹⁶⁹

Having failed to obtain a new concession in the July 2000 allocation round, Pallisco no longer has concessions of its own, although it logs on behalf of others, namely the Cameroonian companies Assene Nkou and AVEICO. Assene Nkou has been awarded UFA 10-039, which covers 47,585 ha in the East Province.¹⁷⁰ AVEICO has been awarded UFA 10-041, which covers 64,460 hectares in Boumba and Ngoko district of East Province. For many years, Pallisco has been the leading exporter of Moabi from Cameroon.¹⁷¹

Pallisco was seeking new concessions in recent allocation rounds on which it intended to establish sustainable forest management practices and has been working on a bushmeat substitution programme at Mindourou. It has also expressed an interest in buying products from community forest operations should any be successfully established (see Cameroon, page 13). Having failed to obtain any concessions of its own, however, it remains to be seen to what extent Pallisco can implement sustainable forest management on those concessions where it acts as a sub-contractor.

ROUGIER

The Rougier SA group is a timber company which has been operating in Central Africa for 50 years and is one of the region's principal loggers.¹⁷² It is listed on the Paris Stock Exchange but is still 46.3% owned by the Rougier



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family.¹⁷³ Rougier usually produces roughly 500,000 cubic metres of timber each year in Central Africa; logs account for 43% of its turnover and earn some FFr 442 million (US\$ 57.5 million).¹⁷⁴ The Rougier group is divided into three main business divisions: forest exploitation and processing in Africa; international timber trade and imports to France; and timber processing in France.¹⁷⁵

The group's French trading and importing subsidiaries are Rougier International, Rougier Panneaux and Rougier Sylvaco. Rougier Panneaux distributes plywood; its products include timber from a wide range of species, especially Okoumé from Gabon and Ayous from Cameroon.¹⁷⁶ Rougier Sylvaco is a trader and importer of timber.¹⁷⁷

Its French processing divisions are Marotte and CEPAM. Marotte is one of France's leading producers of veneer and decorative timber panels,^{178, 179} while CEPAM specialises in flooring, facings and edgings, mainly for the French market.^{180, 181}

Cameroon

Working through several companies, Rougier's business is one of the largest in Cameroon. Its companies include SFID (Société Forestière et Industrielle de la Doumé), based in M'bang and Dimako; Cambois (Société Camerounaise des Bois), based in Djoum; and SID (Société Industrielle de Djoum), which operates south of Dja. Rougier holds 25% equity in TIB (Transformation Intégrée de Bois); SIM (Société Industrielle de Mbang) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of TIB.¹⁸²

Rougier, like other European companies in Cameroon, works closely with logging companies owned by Cameroonian nationals, such as Lorema and Socib. It also sub-contracts for Cameroonian companies and buys timber from third parties for its sawmills. As well as logging its own UFAs, the Rougier group has been logging in smaller areas for short periods through *ventes de coupes* and *récupérations* (see Cameroon, page 13). Rougier admits that logging in these small areas for a limited duration does not allow the implementation of sustainable forest management.¹⁸³

Rougier has been developing forest management plans for its concessions for the past two years, but they are not yet complete.¹⁸⁴ In the meantime, its current operations do not indicate progress towards long-term sustainable management. Group director François Rougier said in the year 2000 in an industry journal article that logging operations in Africa generally had been the equivalent of mining for the past 40 years.¹⁸⁵

SFID (Société Forestière et Industrielle de la Doumé)

Rougier SA owns 56% of SFID¹⁸⁶ which was established in 1955 and was the first European company to start logging in East Province.¹⁸⁷ It has processing facilities in M'Bang, with a production capacity of 120,000 cubic metres per annum, and in Dimako, with a production capacity of 50,000 cubic metres per annum.¹⁸⁸ SFID has a concession of 68,292 hectares (UFA 10-054) in Haut Nyong and Kadey districts, at Lomié and M'Bang,¹⁸⁹ and operates in smaller, limited period licences. It also buys from third parties and operates as a contractor to other licence holders. SFID's operations have moved further east into primary forest as timber supplies have become exhausted.¹⁹⁰ It has logged more than 360,000 hectares since operations began in 1955.¹⁹¹

One of the consequences of this “migration” of logging operations is the associated increase in population density. The town of M’Bang’s population increased from 14,000 in 1985 to 23,000 in 1989 because of increased logging operations, adding to stresses on the surrounding natural environment.¹⁹²

One of the timbers which SFID M’Bang processes is Moabi,¹⁹³ traditionally used by local people (see The Moabi issue, page 6). In the area around Dimako, where SFID has logged in the past, Moabi is now locally extinct.¹⁹⁴ Villagers in M’Bang have complained about the logging of Moabi near villages. In 1993, a SFID manager was reported as saying “if we see a Moabi, we’ll log it, no matter if the trees are felled in the neighbourhood of settlements or below the minimum diameter”.¹⁹⁵ According to the company, Moabi accounts for just a small percentage of SFID’s production.¹⁹⁶

In 1991, senior villagers of M’Bang wrote to Jean Christophe Mitterand, son of the then French President, François Mitterand – Mitterand junior had opened the SFID sawmill at M’Bang in 1989¹⁹⁷ – to complain about SFID’s operations in the area and the company’s failure to fulfil its obligations to the local people.^{198,199} One of their complaints was that SFID burnt wood waste rather than allowing villagers to use it.²⁰⁰ The company says it is not aware of this correspondence.²⁰¹

SFID has benefited directly and indirectly from subsidies, loans and other assistance from the French government and the EU. A pilot sustainable forest management scheme, the Aménagement Pilote Intégré (API), commenced in 1992 at Dimako, with SFID as the industrial partner.²⁰² France’s government development agency, Caisse Française Développement (CFD, now known as Agence Française du Développement-AFD) and the Ministry of Co-opération both contributed funds. The project enabled SFID to acquire a 100,000 hectare concession area particularly rich in commercial species for a period of 30 years.²⁰³ Rougier’s projected investment of FFr 56 million (US\$ 7.3 million) included FFr 13 million (US\$ 1.7 million) borrowed from CFD.²⁰⁴

Although the API project was supposed to put in place long-term sustainable forest management with due care towards local populations, the forest was quickly logged. The project attracted much protest locally and became highly controversial. Villagers sent letters of protest to the Cameroon government and to President Biya.²⁰⁵ People within the forestry ministry, MINEF, have been reported as opposing the project,²⁰⁶ although, as the company states, MINEF was a co-signatory to the project.²⁰⁷ The company failed to fulfil its commitments to establish a forest management plan. According to a consultant associated with the project, SFID was free to do whatever it wanted, with no forest management rules being established at the local level.²⁰⁸ As a result of this and the numerous conflicts that had arisen with local people, including road blockades, the second phase of funding for the project was frozen.²⁰⁹

In July 2000, an official MINEF mission found that SFID was logging outside their *récupération* permit (ARB 167) boundaries near Ngoro, Centre Province. The *récupération* should have been only two kilometres wide but was over four kilometres wide from the western boundary to the last log pond being operated.²¹⁰

CAMBOIS (Société Camerounaise des Bois)

Rougier owns 57% of CAMBOIS.²¹¹ In the July 2000 allocation of new concessions, CAMBOIS was awarded UFA 10-038, one of the largest concessions in the country at 145,176 hectares, even though the company had the lowest score for technical merit of the four companies who bid for the concession (see Cameroon, page 15).^{212,213}

In June 2000, MINEF started official proceedings against CAMBOIS for destruction of marks used by forest administration (Law 94/01 art. 150) and refusal to obey injunctions from MINEF agents (Law 94/01 art.162).²¹⁴

In December 2000, CAMBOIS was fined CFA fr 79,963,608 (US\$ 103,940) for logging outside its allocated area.²¹⁵

SID (Société Industrielle de Djoum)

SID has a processing facility at Djoum with an input capacity 50,000 cubic metres per year.²¹⁶ The exports of this company were 30,000 cubic metres in 1998-9.²¹⁷

TIB (Transformation Intégrée de Bois)

Rougier holds 25% of TIB, which has a sawmill with an annual processing capacity of 50,000 cubic metres.²¹⁸ SIM (Société Industrielle de M’bang) is a forest subsidiary 100% owned by TIB.²¹⁹ SFID (see above) and SIM are believed to act as sub-contractors to TIB and to supply logs to the company.²²⁰ SIM was fined CFA fr 10,311,122 (US\$ 13,402) in December 2000 for not respecting logging norms.²²¹

Central African Republic (CAR)

Rougier used to own SCAD (Société Centrafricaine de Déroulage),²²² but sold it in 1984.²²³ It is now owned by a CAR national of Syrian origin.

Congo (Brazzaville)

Mokabi

Rougier has recently acquired the 370,000 hectare Mokabi concession which it planned to be fully operational by the end of 2000.^{224,225} The concession lies next to the Ndoki-Nouabalé National Park and along the border with CAR. The terms are supposed to be so generous that the company expects to recover its capital investment in two years (see Congo (Brazzaville), page 27).²²⁶

Gabon

Rougier Gabon

Rougier SA owns 86% of Rougier Gabon²²⁷ which is one of the largest timber companies operating in the country, and is estimated to hold around 700,000 hectares.²²⁸ It produces 350,000 cubic metres in an average year.²²⁹ Rougier’s plywood mill at Owendo has a processing capacity of 40,000 cubic metres per annum; the company plans new investment in the mill to come on stream in 2001.²³⁰

Rougier Gabon is currently developing two forest management plans, which are due to be finished in 2001.²³¹ Rougier’s operations in Gabon have been criticised by conservationists because the company reneged on a 1995 agreement it had signed with IUCN to manage and conserve the pristine Ipassa-Mingouli rainforest.²³² These 500,000 hectares of primary rainforest along the Ivindo River in north-eastern Gabon lie between two

spectacular waterfalls which act as natural barriers to the forest. Rougier has a concession which lies partly within the area and, despite its agreement with IUCN not to log there, it has driven access roads into the area and started logging amid local and international protest.²³³ Rougier is said to have sought a presidential decree to confirm its right to log in the area (the President's wishes are above the law).²³⁴ A flight over the area by US conservationists in September 1998 revealed that Lots 12 and 13 had been quite heavily logged, with logging in Lot 13 appearing to be "rapid, intense, and highly destructive. It appears that already about 28,700 ha have already been exploited".²³⁵

In response to criticisms, the company signed a Convention to declare the falls of Mingouli a protected area on 11 February 1998 with the Gabonese ministry of forests.²³⁶ According to Rougier, the company has ceded back to the Government 6,750 hectares of its concessions to preserve the site of Mingouli and to ensure its protection.²³⁷

The Lopé Reserve in Gabon has also been the focus of controversy (see Gabon, page 45). Because of legal confusion, logging licences had been issued in the reserve even though it was a protected area in which such activities are prohibited. Following significant international pressure, Rougier and Leroy Gabon (see Sonae, below) agreed in July 2000 to cease logging there. Rougier agreed to hand over 18,000 hectares of Lot 31 in the Lopé Reserve to the government and proposed that Mont Iboundji be declared a Sanctuary.²³⁸

Both France and the European Union seemed committed to releasing funding during the year 2000 for the construction of an all-weather road linking the comparatively isolated northern region of Gabon both to Cameroon and to the Transgabonais railway at Ndjolé.²³⁹ Rougier, the only major French logging company to have operations near the route, would benefit, along with the Malaysian company, Rimbunan Hijau. Rougier also has a direct and indirect stake (through SNBG – see SNBG feature page 46) in the Transgabonais railway.

SAFI

SAFI SL is a Spanish company based in Valencia.²⁴⁰ It has a logging concession and processing factory in Equatorial Guinea. The concession covers 30,000 ha, located in the district of Mongomo – Welenzas, and the company exports timber to Spain, France, Germany and the Netherlands.²⁴¹

SONAE

The Sonae group, headquartered in Portugal, is the world's largest wood board business, ahead of the US-based Georgia Pacific and Louisiana Pacific.²⁴² A diversified group of companies, Sonae includes several significant timber businesses that are all interconnected with each other: Tafisa of Spain, Glunz of Germany and Isoroy of France. The Sonae group owns 85% of Sonae Industria, which in turn owns 87% of Tafisa (Tableros y Fibras SA) of Spain, which in turn acquired 97% of Glunz of Germany in 1999.²⁴³ Through Glunz, Tafisa now owns Isoroy of France (which Glunz acquired from the French company Pinault – now part of Pinault Printemps Redoute – in 1992). Isoroy, Europe's largest producer of tropical plywood, is the parent company of a number of

companies operating in the Congo Basin, of which Leroy Gabon is the most prominent. Isoroy has long been criticised by environmentalists. Its recent acquisition by Sonae may herald a more ecologically-considerate approach in Gabon (see below) if the new ownership puts in practice concrete actions towards achieving acceptable long-term sustainable forest management.

Cameroon

Isoroy and the French company Becob (now owned by Pinault Printemps Redoute) had a minority share in the former Cameroonian parastatal timber company, SOFIBEL,²⁴⁴ which was privatised during 1993 after serious mismanagement.

Central African Republic (CAR)

Through Leroy, Isoroy used to own a majority share in SICA Bois (Société Industrielle Centrafricaine) which held a 100,000 hectare concession in CAR.²⁴⁵

Equatorial Guinea

Sonae's principal local subsidiary, Compañía Ecuatoguineana de Okumé, was inactive during 1998.²⁴⁶ Isoroy had operations in and bought timber from Equatorial Guinea during the mid-1990s.²⁴⁷ During the late 1990s, Isoroy sought to acquire concessions which it had previously worked, but eventually gave up, frustrated by the Malaysian company Rimbunan Hijau's relationship with the Minister of Forests (see Equatorial Guinea, page 42). Rimbunan Hijau's subsidiary Shimmer eventually gained access to these concessions for itself.²⁴⁸

Gabon

Leroy Gabon

Isoroy's subsidiary, Leroy Gabon was established in 1976.²⁴⁹ During 1997, Leroy Gabon held 654,000 hectares of concessions and produced 154,000 cubic metres of logs.²⁵⁰ Producing 7% of the country's Okoumé output, Leroy Gabon is the third largest timber company in Gabon.^{251, 252} Until the early 1990s, Isoroy also owned a majority interest in SHM (Société de la Haute Mondah) (see Interwood, page 59).

One of former French President Mitterrand's controversial national prestige projects, the National Library in Paris, consumed huge quantities of Okoumé supplied by Leroy Gabon.²⁵³ Leroy Gabon has tried to brand its timber as coming from sustainably managed forests, but has gained little credibility to date. It drew up its own quality mark, "Eurokoumé label",^{254, 255} and was granted preliminary certification by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), but such certification was soon exposed as unwarranted and the certificate was revoked in 1997.²⁵⁶

Leroy and a number of foreign-owned logging companies based in Gabon, notably NSG and Rougier, have held concessions for many years covering part of the Lopé Reserve.²⁵⁷ The Lopé Reserve, created in 1946, was the first protected area in Gabon. Since then, its status has changed over time, leading to the contradictory position where logging licences are valid in an area where all forestry exploitation is forbidden.²⁵⁸

Leroy's concession in Lopé (Lot 32) was first assigned in 1983 to SONG (Société d'Okoumé de la Ngoumé), which had a relationship with the Spanish company Alena,

one of the principal logging companies in colonial Equatorial Guinea.²⁵⁹ After several years of being dormant, the concession was acquired by Leroy in 1990.

Leroy attracted international condemnation for its logging operations inside the Lopé Reserve which is an extremely ecologically significant area of primary rainforest. International conservation pressure led to an agreement being reached between Leroy, Rougier and the government of Gabon in July 2000 to end the legal contradictions governing the Reserve. Leroy renounced its logging activities in 61,000 hectares of the Lopé Reserve. In return, the eastern flank, which is rich in Okoumé but of lesser biodiversity, has been excluded from the Reserve and conceded to Leroy.²⁶⁰

Leroy Gabon is constructing log processing facilities at Owendo, which will include plywood facilities. The plant was due to be fully operational by January 2001.²⁶¹

THANRY

The family-owned Thanry group, headquartered in France, specialises in logging, processing and trade in timber from Africa and is one of the principal loggers and international timber traders in the Congo Basin region.²⁶² The group has logging operations in Ivory Coast and Guinea, as well as interests in Central Africa. The group's operations in Gabon have a reputation of having higher standards than other logging companies, but its reputation for sustainable forest management in Cameroon is poor, an inconsistency which undermines Thanry's credibility when claiming to be a good forest manager. The Thanry group also operates in CAR.

Cameroon

Thanry is the largest logging group in Cameroon, and operates a number of concessions through several subsidiaries: CFC; CIBC; J Prenant; Propalm; SAB and SEBC (see map pp 34-35).^{263,264,265} As of July 2000, it holds 767,135 hectares of concessions through its various subsidiaries. Section 158 of the 1994 Forestry Law in Cameroon states that the "*acquisition of shares or setting up of a forest exploitation company with the intention of increasing the total area of exploitation to more than 200,000 hectares*"²⁶⁶ should result in a fine or imprisonment. MINEF should hold the required information to determine whether Thanry has acted illegally in this respect. It seems clear, however, that two of its subsidiaries, SEBC and CFC (see below), have contravened Section 49 of the 1994 law, which states that "*the total forest area granted to any one licence-holder... may not exceed 200,000 hectares*"²⁶⁷ even if the Thanry group itself has not, depending on whether "licence-holder" is interpreted as the parent company or its subsidiary.

During 1996-7, Thanry's subsidiaries produced 460,000 cubic metres²⁶⁸ of logs, of which 220,000 cubic metres²⁶⁹ and 60,000 cubic metres²⁷⁰ of sawn wood were exported. The main species exploited are Ayous, Sapelli and Tali.

The Thanry group and SFH (Société Forestière de Hazim – the largest and one of the most controversial expatriate Lebanese companies, see page 13) are leading suppliers to East Asian markets.²⁷¹ In recent years, Thanry Cameroon has been working closely with Vicwood, a Hong Kong-registered company, including providing logs

under contract to Vicwood for its veneer plant.²⁷² The volume of timber supplied by Thanry is of sufficient quantity to warrant the exceptional step of chartering boats directly rather than using established shipping companies.²⁷³ Thanry has recently built a large log yard adjacent to the Douala-Yaoundé road and is building another at Kribi for direct loading onto ships.²⁷⁴ The relationship between the companies is believed to have been recently formalised, with unconfirmed reports that Vicwood bought the Thanry Cameroon operations in the year 2000.

SEBC (Société d'Exploitation des Bois du Cameroun)

Thanry's largest subsidiary, SEBC was established in 1969 and currently holds two concessions, (UFAs 10-007 and 10-058), totalling 174,330 hectares in Boumba Ngoko District, East Province, and one concession of 48,800 hectares (UFA 09-007) in Moloundou, bordering the Dja Reserve.²⁷⁵ SEBC concessions cover in total 223,130 hectares, exceeding the 200,000 hectares legal maximum allowed per licence holder. SEBC has processing facilities at Lokomo, with an input capacity of 110,000 cubic metres per year.²⁷⁶

In 1989, SEBC received French government political and financial support to secure a 91,378 hectare concession (licence no.1578) near Lokomo in an area particularly rich in Ayous and Sapelli. CFD (Caisse Française de Développement), the French government's development agency, (now Agence Française du Développement-AFD) subsidised the concession acquisition by loaning Thanry FFr 18 million (US\$ 2.3 million). The concession terms envisage logging at a rate of 10,000 hectares each year for nine years and setting up a small sawmill to process the output.²⁷⁷ Once it had been awarded the concession, however, Thanry established a saw mill with almost ten times greater capacity.²⁷⁸

In January 1993, villagers from Atsjek (25 kilometres from M'bang) blockaded the road used by SEBC to transport timber because SEBC was logging illegally, had failed to provide promised infrastructure and had felled Moabi even within one kilometre of their village (see The Moabi issue, page 6). The villagers wrote to President Biya and the Provincial Governor. Twenty-four people were arrested and it is not known what happened to five people later transferred to Batouri prison.^{279, 280}

In March 2000, SEBC was fined and its operations suspended for three months because of "anarchic" exploitation in its UFA concession and its exploitation in areas for which it did not have a licence.²⁸¹ A MINEF field inspection of SEBC's concession (UFA 10-007) in December 1999 reported "*anarchic logging of the UFA with no respect for the assiettes de coupe*" and "*a flagrant example of violation of forestry regulations*".²⁸² The same team visited another SEBC concession (UFA 10-058) and found similar anarchic exploitation: illegal logging outside the concession area and illegal logging of under-sized logs both within and outside it.²⁸³ The field team noted that the logging practised by this company undermined the entire forest policy and sustainable forest management promoted by the Cameroon government.²⁸⁴

SAB (Société Africaine des Bois)

SAB is a Thanry subsidiary established in 1955.²⁸⁵ It holds one current concession of 60,838 hectares in East Province²⁸⁶ and has a sawmill in Yaoundé with an input capacity of 35,000 cubic metres per year.²⁸⁷

In March 2000, SAB was fined because it had not respected the boundaries of its *assiettes de coupe*; in June 2000, it was fined for logging outside the limits of its UFA concession; and in July 2000, MINEF announced that SAB was disqualified from applying for new concessions in that allocation round because of the serious nature of its illegal forestry activities.²⁸⁸ But this disqualification was not really significant since the concessions that the company was interested in acquiring (UFAs 10.005 and 10.017)²⁸⁹ were not included in that round of allocations.

J Prenant

Another Thanry subsidiary, J Prenant, was awarded a 54,457 hectare concession (UFA 10-045) in East Province during the July 2000 round of new UFA allocations.²⁹⁰ The company has a processing capacity of 38,500 cubic metres per year at Kagnol in East Province.²⁹¹

CFC (Compagnie Forestière du Cameroun)



In 1996, Thanry procured through CFC four contiguous new concessions (UFAs 10-001,002,003 & 004) through Presidential Decree (“*gré à gré*”) rather than public auction as required by the 1994 law. The combined area of the concessions exceeds the 200,000 hectare legal maximum for one concessionaire by 15,000 hectares. CFC has a sawmill with an annual input capacity of 50,000 cubic metres at Yokodouma.

The World Bank has requested the government to revoke all contracts for concessions which had been granted contrary to the 1994 law, which would include the four Thanry concessions, but nothing has been done.

These concessions are located near the only proper road in the forest belt which links Cameroon with the Central African Republic where Thanry has logging concessions which have reportedly increased production recently. But a World Bank report on the timber industry in this part of Cameroon noted the practice of creating documents for Cameroonian timber indicating that the timber originated outside the country and not therefore liable to tax and other controls imposed on Cameroonian timber. Thanry timber could be involved, given that its concessions in the two countries are adjacent to each other (see map pp 34-35).

As with other Thanry subsidiaries, CFC was sanctioned for its misdemeanours in 2000. In March 2000, it was fined for felling under-sized logs, and in June 2000, for logging outside the limit of its *assiette de coupe*.²⁹² The December 1999 MINEF inspection of its concession found systematic felling of under-sized logs, especially Sapelli, and logging outside the designated *assiettes de coupe*.²⁹³

Besides MINEF inspections, a more detailed assessment of CFC’s operations was undertaken in April 2000 by an independent team of Cameroonian and French experts, which not only uncovered further illegalities but also catalogued negative environmental and social impacts as a result of the company’s logging operations (see E&SIA feature, pp 19-22). These included a decline in non-timber

forest products that are important sources of nutrition and local livelihoods; and an exacerbation of economic and social inequalities, including a failure to consult with all local villages.²⁹⁴

Propalm

Propalm has a sawmill with an annual input capacity of 40,000 cubic metres at Douala.²⁹⁵ In the July 2000 allocation of new UFA concessions, Propalm was awarded UFA00-004, which covers 125,490 hectares.²⁹⁶

CIBC (Compagnie Industrielle du Bois au Cameroun)

CIBC has processing facilities with annual input capacity of 55,000 cubic metres

Central African Republic (CAR)

Thanry has two subsidiaries in CAR, Thanry Centrafrique (228,000 hectares) and Sofokad (131,200 hectares).²⁹⁷

Thanry is expanding its business in CAR and has recently installed a saw mill. Thanry Centrafrique (which was formerly known as PRMI)²⁹⁸ has expanded its activities at its concessions around Bamban²⁹⁹ near Berbérati in the west. Roads between the Central African Republic and Cameroon run near Thanry concessions in each country.³⁰⁰

Gabon

CEB (Compagnie Équatoriale des Bois)

Thanry’s largest subsidiary in Gabon, CEB (Compagnie Équatoriale des Bois), is one of Gabon’s most prominent timber companies. It has a saw mill and claims to be planning a US\$ 50 million veneer facility. CEB, established during the French colonial era, had six concessions or logging permits in 1997 covering 505,000 hectares³⁰¹ south of the Lastoursville-Okondja road in the province of Ogooué-Lolo. CEB produced 173,000 cubic metres of logs in 1997, of which 149,000 cubic metres were of Okoumé and Ozigo,³⁰² and has processing facilities at Bambidie and Owendo.³⁰³ The company is also logging a further 68,000 hectares on behalf of others, a practice known as “*fermage*” which Gabon’s new forestry code tries to eliminate because it is associated with poor forest management. Together with other French based-companies, CEB is a minority shareholder in SNBG, which is 51% owned by the Gabonese government (see SNBG feature, page 46). CEB has an 8% share in the company which has bought the management rights to the Transgabonais railway.³⁰⁴

CEB’s concession is being used to test indices and criteria which can be used to determine sustainability of forest management. The test is sponsored by the African Timber Organisation, funded jointly by the EU and France’s Ministry of Co-opération, and being carried out by the forest research institution CIFOR. The Swiss monitoring company SGS has been invited to conduct a preliminary audit of CEB’s management of this concession.³⁰⁵ The French government has provided funds for Thanry and SHM (see Interwood, page 59) to undertake much of the work necessary to prepare their businesses for sustainable forest management. Consultants have, however, been recruited under a separate, Dutch-funded initiative to prepare wildlife management plans for them,³⁰⁶ which suggests a less than holistic approach to forest management on the part of the French Government.

CEB concessions are located in one of the most densely populated parts of Gabon.³⁰⁷ CEB practices in Gabon are

said to be better than those of other logging companies in the country, but the company's poor record in Cameroon and its past record in Gabon place a question mark over the company's real commitment to sustainable forest management. The company currently has a rotation period of 17 years which is generally considered to be too short for proper regeneration of the stock of commercial species.³⁰⁸ The company also engages in *fermage* (see page 46).³⁰⁹

Fieldwork undertaken in June 2000 by the Gabonese NGO CIAJE around CEB's operations in Bambidi indicate the extent to which CEB has tried to interact positively with local communities and workers.³¹⁰ In its concessions in Lastoursville, CEB undertook a sociological study to identify how to ensure a good relationship with villagers living near its concessions and whose opposition to the company could potentially threaten CEB activities. The findings of the study were used to set up a programme aimed at ensuring that local people also profit from logging. In the words of the CEB public relations representative in the country, these forests are "their [local villagers'] forests".³¹¹ The company's programme includes activities aimed at improving local people's income, such as the development of a fish breeding site in Bambidi; setting apart one of the forest units for local people and financing processing of timber boards for the villagers. Villagers living near CEB concessions can also attend the company health centre, while children have access to a school where teachers are good (which is rare in logging areas) and they receive free reading primers. CEB employs mainly people from the villages surrounding their concessions. The company has built a road to break up the isolation of a village in Sebe (near Lastoursville). CEB accommodation for its workers is better than those of other companies. Workers also have access to recreation facilities, considerably more than workers have in logging camps elsewhere in Gabon.

CEB has taken several initiatives to stop bushmeat hunting. Workers who engage in such activities are penalised and the company plans to undertake a bushmeat awareness campaign. As to the use of timber, the company seems less concerned with wasting forest resources; researchers found discarded timber lying around the logging camp.

Prior to opening its current concessions, CEB had almost exhausted its concessions in the south-west of Gabon, close to the Moukalaba Reserve where its logging roads gave access to the Doudou Mountains³¹² which were once rich in animal life. The Doudou Mountains remain one of several areas in Gabon which have been recommended for several years for, but not obtained, legal protection.^{313, 314}

Others

Thanry's other subsidiaries in Gabon include EFG (Exploitation Forestière du Gabon) which has had a 100,000 hectare concession near Ndjolé since 1976; SIL (Sciages Industriel de la Lowe) which operates sawmills and was due to open at the end of 1995 a new sawmill with an input capacity of 36,000 cubic metres per year, built for US\$ 3 million; Thanry Gabon; and SAFOR which is involved in logging, saw milling, moulding, railway sleepers and charcoal. Thanry Gabon Industrie, a joint venture between CEB and Batave van Hout (of The Netherlands), is to become one of the largest veneer producers in Africa when its new 50,000 cubic metres per

year output processing facility between Owendo and Libreville is complete.³¹⁵

If Thanry wants to be a credible actor in the market for timber from sustainably managed forests, it may have to disassociate its operations in Gabon from those in Cameroon. One commercial buyer of Thanry timber has reportedly stopped buying from the company because of its poor record in Cameroon. The easy option would be to dispose of its operations in Cameroon – some of Thanry's competitors have particularly poor, but not necessarily worse, records for forest resource management there. Raising the standards of its forestry operations and management practices in Cameroon and CAR would, however, be a more commendable option and demonstrate the whole group's commitment to implementing sustainable forest management.

Unconfirmed reports in August 2000, however, suggest that Thanry has taken the easy option by selling all its operations in Cameroon to Vicwood of Hong Kong. Thanry has apparently agreed with Vicwood that, for the purposes of marketing timber in Europe, Vicwood will continue to use the Thanry brand name, potentially creating misunderstanding and deception as to the sustainability of timber from Cameroon.

VASTO LEGNO

Vasto Legno is a family-owned Italian timber company. It has been operating for 120 years and has a modern industrial complex in Milan specialising in sawnwood, its core business, and in rotary and sliced veneers.³¹⁶ The company produces about 5 million square metres of Ayous veneers each year and claims to be the world leader of Ayous production and one of the largest suppliers of exotic species such as Ayous, Limba, Iroko, Sipo, Afrormosia and Moabi.³¹⁷

Cameroon

Vasto Legno has been logging in Cameroon for over 30 years.³¹⁸ It operates through two companies, SEBAC (Société d'Exploitation des Bois d'Afrique Centrale) and SEFAC (Société d'Exploitation Forestière et Agricole du Cameroun).³¹⁹ It currently operates on two legally-allocated concessions totalling 151,393 hectares as well as operating outside its allocated concessions. During 1998-9, Vasto Legno produced 187,000 cubic metres of logs of which it exported 42,000 cubic metres.³²⁰

SEBAC (Société d'Exploitation des Bois d'Afrique Centrale)

SEBAC has processing facilities at Béla with an input capacity of 36,000 cubic metres per year.³²¹ SEBAC currently logs in East Province in a concession (UFA 10-009) which covers 88,796 hectares. It has also been logging in another concession (UFA 10-008) which covers 60,371 hectares (even though it has not yet been allocated) using a revoked licence number (1826).³²²



SEFAC (Société d'Exploitation Forestière et Agricole du Cameroun)

SEFAC has a current concession in East Province (UFA 10-012) of 62,597 hectares,³²³ and timber processing facilities in Libongo with an annual input capacity of 130,000 cubic metres.³²⁴

In March 1999, WWF President, Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh, visited SEFAC installations and reportedly welcomed the company's actions towards sustainable forest management.³²⁵ SEFAC had publicised its contributions to local infrastructure, such as schools, a clinic and 250 kilometres of roads in the heart of the forest.³²⁶ The company also stated that it had taken over responsibility for the running of the police, post and customs service in Libongo, including paying staff salaries.³²⁷

During this high-profile visit, SEFAC announced a firm commitment to preserving the forest, stating it had been in the "avant-garde of sustainable exploitation" for 31 years, and to complying with existing forestry regulations.³²⁸ The company has been praised for its investment in high-tech processing facilities at Libongo, and has received positive media attention for its investment in infrastructure for the workers and their families in this logging town.³²⁹

But reports from the ground suggest a more complex picture with negative aspects, too. Local people have complained about the company-subsidised school, which has two teachers for 190 six- to seven-year olds, and the lack of scope for raising concerns about pay and conditions for fear of losing one's job.³³⁰ The company's funding of local state institutions, such as the police and customs service, is open to abuse and undermines any independence these institutions may have had. An underlying concern is for the long-term viability of Libongo, given its dependence on SEFAC's continued access to timber sources. If the company does not manage the forest sustainably and ensure a long-term supply of quality timber, Libongo could have an uncertain future. The pattern of boom-and-bust logging towns in Cameroon, such as nearby Kika, does not contribute to long-term sustainable development for rural people.

Official reports from SEFAC's concession do not alleviate these concerns. In December 1999, a MINEF mission to the SEFAC concession (UFA 10-012) found "anarchic" and illegal operations, including logging outside concession boundaries and cutting undersized logs, especially Sapelli. The mission noted that this concession, which the company has operated for more than 30 years, is of poor quality,³³¹ suggesting that SEFAC has exhausted the best timber, which poses problems for the supply of its large mill.

In March 2000, SEFAC was fined and its activities suspended for three months.³³² It was subsequently disqualified from the new concession allocations in July 2000 for serious wrongdoing in its forestry activities.³³³

WIJMA

Wijma Kampen BV of The Netherlands is a family firm which is a subsidiary of Koninklijke Houthandel G. Wijma & Zonen BV (GWZ).³³⁴ It has been operating for over 100 years and specialises in marine hardwoods and structures, such as bridges, boardwalks and floodgates. The Dutch government is a significant customer. Much of the company's hardwood timber comes from subsidiaries in

Africa. It also has contacts in Europe, America and Asia.³³⁵ African subsidiaries are in Cameroon, Ghana and the Ivory Coast. European subsidiaries are in France, Germany, The Netherlands and the UK.³³⁶

Cameroon

Wijma's subsidiary in Cameroon is Wijma Douala SARL. It also has close links to CFK (Compagnie Forestière de Kribi), although it is not known whether CFK is a subsidiary of the Wijma group or not. Wijma has a sawmill at Kribi, with an input capacity of 50,000 cubic metres per year, while CFK has a processing capacity of 14,000 cubic metres per year.³³⁷ In 1996-7, Wijma produced 64,314 cubic metres of logs of which 24,640 cubic metres were exported. CFK produced 18,680 cubic metres of logs and exported 5,433 cubic metres in the same period.³³⁸ Wijma is one of the main exporters of Azobé from Cameroon.

The operations of Wijma in Cameroon have changed fundamentally over the past few years. The company used to log directly in a number of concessions totalling 208,650 hectares. According to MINEF documentation, these have now expired and the company acts as a contractor to and purchaser of logs from other companies, such as COFA, a company owned by the Cameroonian President's nephew.

In recent years, Wijma worked in partnership with the Dutch tropical forest research programme, Tropenbos. In July 2000, Wijma bid for a new concession but was unsuccessful, even though it had the highest technical score (*see* Cameroon, page 15).³³⁹ Despite these indications of a commitment to improved forest management, given that the company no longer holds any concessions in Cameroon, it is not known whether Wijma exerts any influence over the management of concessions belonging to its suppliers or the companies to whom it acts as contractor.

A MINEF mission to the Centre and South Provinces in December 1999³⁴⁰ reported that CFK was logging in *assiette de coupe* (number 10 in UFA 09-021), a concession which belongs to COFA, without a permit to do so. The report goes on to say that Wijma management stated that the request for the authorisation to operate in the *assiette de coupe* was in process at MINEF: "*The director of operations for the group Wijma, M. Urbaniak Francis stated that the request for the authorisation to operate in the assiette de coupe was in process at MINEF. However, he refused to sign the official infractions report attached in Annexe 1.A.*"

WONNEMANN

The German company Gerhard Wonnemann GmbH was founded in 1948 and is one of the largest operators in Congo (Brazzaville), where it operates in the south of the country as SOCOBOIS.^{341, 342} The German development agency, DEG, was reported to own 30% of SOCOBOIS in 1993,³⁴³ but recent correspondence with DEG states that this is no longer the case.³⁴⁴ SOCOBOIS has been operating in Congo since 1964 but ceased operations in 1999 when seven foreign employees were kidnapped and later released by the militia.³⁴⁵ In March 2000, government sources were reported as stating that SOCOBOIS would soon be restarting its activities.³⁴⁶

Conclusions and Recommendations

THE RAINFORESTS OF Central Africa provide food and livelihoods for millions of forest-dependent peoples and contain unique biodiversity; but they are seen increasingly simply in terms of industrial timber production. Corporations, predominantly transnational corporations, control most of the forests in the region. Multilateral and bilateral creditors are encouraging the industrial exploitation of these forests with little thought for the capacity of national governments to enforce forestry legislation, the timber industry's response to weak enforcement of legislation, and the lack of transparency and democracy in governments. As a result, private companies are logging illegally on a significant scale and national governments are using logging concessions to develop and maintain their various patronage networks, a process which perpetuates the lack of transparency and democracy, particularly when it involves senior political and military figures.

Within this context, forest-dependent peoples become even more marginalised; they are excluded from decision-making about how forests should be used and managed; in the process, their rights are undermined and their needs ignored. Industrial forestry removes many of the trees upon which local communities depend for food, medicines and building materials. The commercial hunting of bushmeat, which is directly and indirectly facilitated by logging, has decimated wildlife, undermined subsistence hunting and increased food insecurity. The commercial hunting of endangered species, such as primates and elephants, threatens their continued existence.

If these forest industrialisation policies continue in Central Africa and these issues go unaddressed, the buyers of timber will continue to generate poverty and environmental degradation. Ensuring that the forests of Central Africa are managed so that they are not degraded or destroyed but provide sustainable long-term livelihoods for local people should be the primary goal of all stakeholders. To this end, national governments, assisted by multilateral and bilateral creditors, must provide a fundamentally improved and enforced regulatory framework within which forestry companies can operate. Such a framework should address social issues, forest industrialisation policies and environmental issues.

Social issues

Ensuring that all local peoples are equally represented at the heart of decision-making and policy development would be a first step towards sustainable forest management. This step would also be more likely to ensure socially-just development that respects forest ecosystems. This would involve:

- § recognising and respecting traditional tenure and use rights, including within national laws;
- § recognising the right of all local communities to meaningful and equitable participation in identifying the kind of forest management they want, including alternatives to industrial timber production;
- § providing culturally-appropriate opportunities for local communities to identify their needs and to be involved in planning and managing development strategies and social infrastructure;
- § assisting local communities and domestic civil society NGOs to build their capacity to deal with the other, more powerful, stakeholders in forest management;
- § ensuring that all members of communities, including women, the elderly and children, are involved in management and decision-making in ways which they feel are appropriate.

Forest Industrialisation Policy

One of the main justifications given for pursuing industrial forestry policies is poverty alleviation. The evidence presented in this report suggests that the timber industry does not contribute to this goal; on the contrary, the prevalence of illegal logging and inequitable income distribution means that industrial timber exploitation exacerbates the poverty of forest-dependent peoples.

Multilateral and bilateral institutions, and national governments consistently demonstrate a lack of long-term planning and an inability to learn from experience elsewhere, both in the region and in the forestry sector, when pursuing forestry policies. For example, the wave of deforestation now rolling across West and Central Africa is similar to that induced by forest policies in South-East Asia, where many former timber-producing countries are now net timber importers. The lack of transparency within governments and the industry inhibits making progress towards long-term sustainable development. The following steps would go some way towards addressing the concerns associated with industrial forestry policy:

- § multilateral and bilateral institutions should be more accountable for the policies they impose and more responsive to national government and civil society concerns;
- § debt cancellation initiatives that enable significantly increased investment in basic services such as education and health should be pursued;
- § government transparency and accountability to civil society should be ensured;
- § political, military and other government figures should not gain personally from the forestry sector, either as concession holders or from concession allocation practices or as the recipients of informal or formal financial payments;
- § the benefits of forest development policies should be distributed more equitably so that all local forest-dependent peoples gain more income and are actively involved in deciding how that income is used;
- § the capacity of governments to enforce national forestry legislation should be developed and supported;
- § registers of interests of companies operating in the forestry sector should be made both public and accessible;
- § legal avenues through which governments and civil society can pursue transnational companies to their headquarters when criminal activity has been demonstrated should be developed and made accessible.

Illegal Timber Production and Trade

Certain sections of the forestry industry are perpetrating illegal and unethical practices in the forest itself and along the trading chain, as this report demonstrates. Illegal production and trade must be addressed as a priority by both producing and consuming countries acting together. The systematic smuggling of large volumes of logs and processed timber does not go undetected without the collusion of government officials. A "lack of means" to tackle the problem effectively should not prevent governments from making public statements about the problems they face. Consumer countries must acknowledge their role and act positively. Importers may be receiving stolen, fraudulently obtained or smuggled goods but to date neither importing country governments nor the trade have demonstrated much concern about this. Importing and exporting governments have not sought to tackle the issues of illegal trade or trade in illegally-produced timber either by bilateral co-operation or within international trade arenas such as the WTO. The G7 group of countries have made statements about the unacceptability of illegal logging, but have taken no concrete actions to follow them up. The following actions would be a first step in demonstrating governments' commitments to eradicating illegal timber production and trade:

- § the monitoring of forestry companies should be rigorous, transparent and even-handed;
- § stringent measures should be taken against all companies involved in illegal production and trading practices: fines should be punitive; further courses of action, such as exclusion from the forestry sector and/or criminal proceedings, should be pursued for repeat or flagrant violations of forestry laws;
- § trade policies should be subject to an assessment of the impact on sustainable development, including addressing issues of equitable development and ecological sustainability;
- § governments must support ways of distinguishing between internationally-traded timber that has been certified by credible independent bodies such as the FSC as originating from sustainably-managed forests, and uncertified timber. They should pursue this matter under WTO rules, among other avenues;
- § support for effective, producer country initiatives to regulate the timber trade should be provided, including support from consuming country customs departments to track illegal shipments of timber.

Environmental Issues

The implementation of current national forest- and environment-related laws, including respect for protected area boundaries, is the minimum standard for reducing the environmental impact of forestry operations. From this base line, a number of further steps need to be taken to protect the integrity of forests:

- § the commercial hunting of bushmeat should be addressed in a culturally-sensitive way to ensure the continued existence of the dwindling numbers of non-protected species and that of rare and endangered species;
- § local environmental goods and benefits of forests as well as larger-scale environmental goods and benefits, including potable water, food security, soil quality, and the protection of biodiversity, should be identified and protected;
- § the long-term impacts of industrial timber extraction on the quality and extent of the region's rainforests should be mitigated.

Appendix : Key to map concession areas

Cameroon

Map Ref No.	Company	Parent company/group*	License
1	MMG		00-003
2	Unallocated		00-002
3	Unallocated		00-001
4	Unallocated		09-028
6	Unallocated		09-027
7	Unallocated		09-026
8	HFC	Bollore	09-025
9	HFC	Bollore	09-025
10	HFC	Bollore	09-025
11	Unallocated		09-020
12	Unallocated		09-020
13	COFA	Not known	09-021
14	HFC	Bollore	09-024
15	Unallocated		09-022
16	Bubinga	Not known	09-023
17	Unallocated		09-018
18	Unallocated		09-017
19	CUF	Not known	09-019
20	SOFOPETRA	Not known	09-015
21	Unallocated		09-016
22	Unallocated		09-013
23	Unallocated		09-011
24	Unallocated		09-012
25	Unallocated		09-014
26	Unallocated		09-014
27	Unallocated		10-049
28	Unallocated		10-049
29	Unallocated		10-049
30	Unallocated		10-050
31	Unallocated		10-050
32	Unallocated		09-014
33	Unallocated		10-050
34	Unallocated		10-050
35	Unallocated		10-048
36	Unallocated		10-048
37	Unallocated		10-048
38	Unallocated		10-048
39	Unallocated		10-048
40	Unallocated		09-010
41	Unallocated		09-010
42	Unallocated		09-009
43	Unallocated		09-008
44	SEBC	Thanry	09-007
45	Mponengang	Not known	10-047
46	SFF	Not known	09-006
47	LOREMA	Rougier	09-005A
48	COFA	Not known	09-004
49	LOREMA	Rougier	09-003
50	Unallocated		10-036
51	Unallocated		09-002
51	Unallocated		10-035
52	Unallocated		09-001
52	Unallocated		10-034
55	Unallocated		10-033
56	SCTB Sari	Not known	10-046
57	Unallocated		10-060
58	J. Prenant	Thanry	10-045
59	Unallocated		10-044
60	Unallocated		10-042
61	AVIECO	Not known	10-041
62	KIEFFER	Not known	10-037
63	Unallocated		10-059
64	SEBC	Thanry	10-058
65	Unallocated		10-043
66	Unallocated		10-040
67	ASSENE NKOU	Not known	10-039
68	Unallocated		10-055
69	Mbenj	Not known	10-057
70	Unallocated		10-056
71	SFD	Rougier	10-054
72	CAMBOIS	Rougier	10-038
73	Ingeniere Forestiere	Not known	10-031
74	Unallocated		10-030
75	SFDB	Not known	10-029
76	Unallocated		10-028
77	Unallocated		10-032
78	Unallocated		10-053
79	Unallocated		10-052
80	AVIECO		10-051
81	ALPICAM	Alpi	10-026
82	HFC	Bollore	10-025
83	Unallocated		10-024
84	Green Val	Not known	10-021
85	SFCS	Not known	10-023
86	GRUMCAM	Alpi	10-020
87	Ingeniere Forestiere	Not known	10-022
88	Unallocated		10-019
89	SIBAF	Bollore	10-018
90	Unallocated		10-017
91	Unallocated		10-016
92	ETMC	Not known	10-015
93	Unallocated		10-014
94	CFC	Thanry	10-001
95	CFC	Thanry	10-002
96	CFC	Thanry	10-003
97	CFC	Thanry	10-004
98	Unallocated		10-005
99	SEBC	Thanry	10-007
100	Unallocated		10-008
101	BOTAC	Not known	10-009
102	Unallocated		10-010
103	SAB	Thanry	10-011
104	Unallocated		10-013
105	SEFAC	Other European	10-012
106	Unallocated		10-027

201	Unallocated				11-001
206	SFH	Not known			08-003
207	EFMK	Not known			08-004
208	Unallocated				08-005
214	INC Sari	Not known			08-009
216	INC Sari	Not known			08-008
217	SFB Sari	Not known			08-006
243	CORON	European			08-002
244	Panagiotis Marelis	Not known			10-062
246	CORON	European			08-001
255	SFSC	Not known			10-061
259	Unallocated				08-007
281	CPCC	Not known			07-002
no polygon	Propalm	Thanry			00-004
no polygon	SOCIB	Not known			09-005B
no polygon	SIBAF	Bollore			10-063

*European=group with a European operating base

CAR

Map Ref No.	Company	Parent company/group
1	SITI	Not known
2	RIO - RIVUMA	Not known
3	SEFCA	Lebanese
4	IFB	French
5	IFB	French
6	THANRY Centrafique	Thanry/French
7	SESAM - Réserve de Bayanga	
WTK/(Malaysian/French)		
8	SYLVICOLE - Réserve de Bayanga	Not known
9	SCAD	Syrian-CAR

Congo (Brazzaville)

Map Ref No.	Company Name	Parent Company / Group*	License
11	Danzer	Danzer	UFA EST
12	SOCALIB		UFA OUEST
13	CIB	Feldmeyer	UFA PAKOLA
14	CIB	Feldmeyer	UFA KABO
15	FNC	European	UFA ENYELE
16	SOFORIB	European	UFA BETOU
17	Not known		UFA OLLOMBO
18	Not known		UFA KELLE
19	SFAC		UFA CENTRE
20	CIB	Feldmeyer	UFA
21	Not known		UFA LOPOLA
22	Not known		UFA MIMBELI
23	Not known		UFA LOUBONGA
24	SFM	European	UFA MISSA
25	Not known		UFA BALA
26	Not known		UFA TSAMA
27	Not known		UFA EWO
28	Not known		UFA MAMBILI-SUD
29	Not known		UFA MBOMO
30	Not known		UFA MAMBILI-NORD
32	Not known		UFA IPENDJA
33	Rougier	Rougier	UFA MOKABI
35	SOCOBOIS	Wonnemann	UFA 7
36	BOPLAC	Bruynzeel/DLH Nordisk	UFA 7
37	SOCOBOIS	Wonnemann	UFA 6
38	SOBOQI		
39	KB		UFA 7
40	MAB SARL		UFA 7
41	NGCUMA, J		UFA 6
42	COMETRAB		UFA 7
43	COMETRAB		UFA 10
44	SOCOBOIS	Wonnemann	UFA 10
45	SIBOM		UFA 7
46	BOPLAC	Bruynzeel/DLH Nordisk	UFA 10
47	BOPLAC	Bruynzeel/DLH Nordisk	UFA 10
48	MOUNTOU		UFA 7
49	CAFAN		UFA 5
50	EFBB		UFA 7
51	FOUTY, M		UFA 7
52	NGAMBOUH		UFA 7
53	QUATOR		UFA 10
54	SFGC		UFA 10
55	SOUMBOU		UFA 8
56	MOUNGONDO		UFA 10
57	NGOUMA, J		UFA 11
58	SIBOM		UFA 5
59	CITB		UFA 5
60	FAUSTO C		UFA 5
61	FORALAC		UFA 7&8
62	ENEF		UFA 7
63	SFGC		UFA 11
64	BANINA		UFA 5
65	FORALAC		UFA5
66	COMETRAB		UFA 2
67	SOCOBOIS	Wonnemann	UFA 3
68	FORPLAC		UFA 3
69	MOUNGONDO		UFA 8
70	AUBEVILLE		UFA 8&9
71	FORALAC		UFA 2
72	COFIBOIS		UFA 2
73	QUATOR		UFA 2
74	KIMBAKALA		UFA 1
75	FAUSTO		UFA 1
77	LTA		UFA 1
78	NGAMBOU		UFA 1
76 & 79	MAV		UFA 1

*European=company with European operations base

Gabon

Map Ref No.	Company name	Parent company/group*
1	Biloghe Amieng Jeanne	Not known
2	Unknown	
3	Unknown	
4	SOGASCIC	Not known
5	Rougier Gabon	ROUGIER
6	Meye Rosalie	Not known
8	Tondoukoue Marc A.	Not known
10	BSG	Not known
11	Abeng Marcelle	Not known
14	Ntchindianogo Innocent	Not known
15	ELLA EDZO JULES	Not known
16	NSG	European
17	CFG	Not known
18	CEB	THANRY
20	BENGA JOSEPHINE	Not known
21	Ayito Minko Veronique	Not known
22	BICT	Not known
23	Ngonga Mossala	Not known
24	Leroy Gabon	SONAE
25	Mba Nguema Antoine	Not known
26	Biteghe Laurent	Not known
27	GEB	Not known
28	AYITO MINKO VERONIQUE	Not known
29	Loury Benjamin	Not known
30	ESSOUGHE GEORGETTE	Not known
31	CEB	THANRY
33	SHM	INTERWOOD
34	Ekomie Bengone Andre	Not known
35	Koumazock Firmin	Not known
36	Koumba Nziengui Etienne	Not known
37	Ngoma Makaya Guy H	Not known
39	Guy Nzouba Ndam	Not known
41	INTER-Bois	Not known
42	Loury Benjamin	Not known
43	Ndzeri Helene	Not known
45	Unallocated	
46	Ilama Anastasie	Not known
48	Unallocated	
49	Negobois/SIL*	THANRY
51	Zang Sylvie	Not known
54	Unallocated	
55	Ntsame	Not known
56	Bingangoye Scholastique	Not known
57	Unallocated	
59	Chambrier Rahandi Eloi/FUMU*	Not known
61	Ndong Nze Paul Ed	Not known
63	Boukoubi Faustin	Not known
64	Djambie Helene Chantal	Not known
65	Unallocated	
66	EFN	Not known
67	SOFITRA	Not known
68	Magnaga Martin Fidele	Not known
68	Akendemgue Albert	Not known
71	Brune Emile/NZE EKOMIE	Not known
72	SIFG	Not known
73	SFM/FOUDOU*	Not known
75	BSG/EFG*	THANRY
76	Nkoghe Annie Solange	Not known
77	CEB	Rougier
78		Rougier
81	Obame	Not known
82	Enembe Obame Paul	Not known
83	Unallocated	
84	CEB/BRUNE*	Thanry
85	Nghoghe Daniel	Not known
88	Lekogho Leon	Not known
89	SHM	Interwood
90	Kouamba Jacques	Not known
92	Ali Ben Bongo	Not known
97	Ndinga Jean Martin	Not known
99	Angue Emilie	Not known
100	Moubouengo M Francoise	Not known
101	SFM	Not known
103	SAB	Not known
106	SGEF	Not known
108	Abeng Marcelle	Not known
109	Eyeghe Obiang A	Not known
110	LOURY	Not known
111	Ngua Vital/FOBO*	Not known
113	Iwenga Christine	Not known
114	FOBO	Not known
115	NEGOGOIS	Not known
116	FOBO	Not known
118	LEROY	SONAE
121	CAF	Not known
122	Nkie Nkoure Antoinette/LUTEXFO*	European
123	CFG	Not known
124	Iwenga Christine/LUTEXFO*	European
126	Ngoma Colette/LUTEXFO*	European
127	FUMU	Not known
128	Ndjave Ndjoye Cecilia/SICL*	Not known
130	Mihindou Anicet	Not known
131	Obame Nguema Paulin	Not known
133	CEB	THANRY
134	CBG	Not known
135	Lutexo/Soforga	European
136	Bilane Marc	Not known
137	Nguema Eugene	Not known
138	Ella Edzo Jules	Not known
140	Biloghe Amieng Jeanne/EMANE AVA*	Not known
141	SHM	INTERWOOD
143	Bourdette Grace C.	Not known
144	SIBO	Not known
145	CEB	THANRY
146	CEB	THANRY

147	Akoghe Calvin/SEG*	Not known	298	Aubame Jean Felix	Not known	413	BASSO TIMBER	European
148	Oberdino Charles	Not known	299	Inter-Bois	Not known	414	TSIBAH	Not known
149	Obame Valentin/FOBO*	Not known	301	Boukandou Monique	Not known	415	ALIBALA	Not known
150	Nguema Owono Paulin	Not known	302	Ndzeng Elie Theophile	Not known	416	GFS	Not known
151	Lenganguet Rosine	Not known	304	Ndong Nze Paul Ed.	Not known	417	SIBAG	European
152	KESSANY	Not known	305	Benga Josephine/MIHINDOU*	Not known	418	GFS	Not known
153	Diecko Diea Donne/CFA*	Not known	307	Mayila Louis Gaston	Not known	419	OSSOAMI	Not known
156	Rougier Gabon	ROUGIER	310	SOMIVAB	European	420	COFMA	Not known
157	FUMU	Not known	311	ASSE	Not known	421	MATHA	Not known
158	Reteno Ndiaye Gatién	Not known	312	NGUIE MENGOME	Not known	422	CFG	Not known
159	FUMU	Not known	313	SOMIVAB	European	423	CEB	THANRY
160	UFMO	Not known	314	AYITO	Not known	424	GFL	Not known
161	Akoghe Calvin	Not known	315	EDIE MENZAH	Not known	425	CFG	Not known
163	Ngonga Mossala	Not known	316	NGUEMA	Not known	426	CEB	THANRY
164	Mouvagha Tchioba	Not known	317	MEYO NZE	Not known	427	CEB	THANRY
165	SBL	European	318	SOMIVAB	European	428	CEB	THANRY
166	CEB	THANRY	319	SFE	Not known	429	CAGRIMO	Not known
168	Lutexo/Soforga/CEB*	THANRY	320	OBAME NZE	Not known	430	SBNG	Not known
169	CEB	THANRY	321	NZIE	Not known	431	SBNG	Not known
170	CEB	THANRY	322	OBAME MBA	Not known	432	CEB	THANRY
171	CEB	THANRY	323	ETOUGHE NKOGHE	Not known	433	CEB	THANRY
172	Ndjave Ndiaye Cecilia	Not known	324	ROG	ROUGIER	434	SOGA-IMPORT	Not known
173	Djambie Helene Chantal/NEGBOBOIS*	Not known	325	OBAME	Not known	435	CEB	THANRY
180	IBG	Not known	326	ROG	ROUGIER	436	CEB	THANRY
181	N'Name Obame M	Not known	327	SOGASCIC	Not known	437	MOUNGUEGUI	Not known
182	Nguié Mengome Martine	Not known	328	NGUEMA	Not known	438	MOUNGUEGUI	Not known
183	INFOBOIS	Not known	329	Unallocated		439	CFSG	Not known
184	Omar Bongo	Not known	330	CFG	Not known	440	EFIB	Not known
185	CEB	THANRY	331	CFG	Not known	441	BOUSSAMBA	Not known
186	Negobois/NGOJONI*	Not known	332	ROG	ROUGIER	442	SOFOSUGA	Not known
188	Komba Gisele	Not known	333	ROG	ROUGIER	443	CEB	THANRY
189	UFMO	Not known	334	CFG	Not known	444	MBOUMBA	Not known
190	Adjobellane Andre Walker	Not known	335	ROG	ROUGIER	445	ROG	ROUGIER
193	Obame Vincent	Not known	336	ROG	ROUGIER	446	ROG	ROUGIER
194	Sepha Francois/EGG*	Not known	337	LEROY	SONAE	447	ROG	ROUGIER
195	Igowa Rerambyah	Not known	338	ROG	ROUGIER	448	CFSG	Not known
196	Cofma/SBNG*	Not known	339	ROG	ROUGIER	449	IVALA	Not known
200	Amvame Ndong Georges/UFMO*	Not known	340	ROG	ROUGIER	450	GOMAS	Not known
202	ETENO	Not known	341	ROG	ROUGIER	451	CFSG	Not known
203	Ngoma Suzanne	Not known	342	LUTEXFO	European	452	MAMADOU	Not known
204	Nze Ekekang Thimothee	Not known	343	ROG	ROUGIER	453	FOBO	MALAYSIAN
205	Eteno Jean Bernard/CEB*	THANRY	344	SIL	THANRY	454	Unallocated	
206	Charbonnier Jean Georges	Not known	345	FOBO	MALAYSIAN	455	IWENGA	Not known
207	Wora Maurice	Not known	346	FOBO	MALAYSIAN	501	EFN	Not known
208	FROI MBENGANI	Not known	347	ROG	ROUGIER	502	Ikinda Joachim	Not known
209	Wora Maurice	Not known	348	ROG	ROUGIER	506	Nze Ekomie Jean Felix	Not known
211	SBNG	Not known	349	ROG	ROUGIER	508	SAF	Not known
212	Timber Mac/SBNG*	Not known	350	CFG	Not known	510	Ndjave Ndiaye Albert/FOBO*	Not known
213	Leroy Gabon	SONAE	351	SEFA	Not known	known/MALAYSIAN		
214	Fumu Alfred	Not known	352	SEFA	Not known	511	Nguié Mengome Martine	Not known
219	Ndombi Faustine	Not known	353	EFG	THANRY	512	Ndong Ignace	Not known
220	Mouassa Jean/CEB*	THANRY	354	EFG	THANRY	513	Nze Julien	Not known
221	SIL/NGUIA*	THANRY	355	EFG	THANRY	514	Lutexo/Soforga	European
223	UFL	Not known	357	EFN	Not known	515	Bingangoye Scholastique	Not known
224	Nze Ekomie Jean Felix	Not known	358	FOBO	Not known	517	CFG	Not known
225	Lutexo/Soforga	European	359	FOBO	Not known	521	CFA	Feldmeyer/ European
226	Djebo Gisele	Not known	360	NZE	Not known	525	Apandina Paul Marc	Not known
227	Ndong Jean Pierre	Not known	361	SICCARDI	Not known	526	Kongo Michel	Not known
228	Malekou Paul	Not known	362	SOMIVAB	European	527	EGG	Not known
229	EFL	Not known	363	EYEGHE OBIANG	Not known	528	Ntologo Daniel	Not known
230	Lekogho Leon	Not known	364	SAF	Not known	529	SOFOLIB	Not known
232	LEROY	SONAE	365	NKOGUE	Not known	534	Ndogoula Y Ndogoula	Not known
235	LIPOBO	Not known	366	ROG	ROUGIER	535	Nguema Eugene	Not known
236	UFL/NGALEKU*	Not known	367	AYITO	Not known	539	Mbourou Geogina	Not known
237	Ladaga Leounda	Not known	368	NZE	Not known	540	Ntoutoume MeyoEVALA OREVOUNO*	Not known
238	EBILA	Not known	369	SITAUULT	Not known	541	Dzime MBA Pierre	Not known
240	Ngouoni Ayila Victor/UFL*	Not known	370	RECKATY	Not known	542	Tsibah Charles	Not known
241	Obame Assoumo	Not known	371	SEO	Not known	543	Etoughe Joseph	Not known
242	Bilala Augustin	Not known	372	FOBO	Not known	600	ROG	ROUGIER
244	LEROY	SONAE	373	BEKALE	Not known	601	FOMO	Not known
246	OLERY	Not known	374	MEFANE	Not known	602	Leflem Maurice/ALI MBELE*	Not known
247	BSG	Not known	375	FOBO	Not known	604	SFT	Not known
251	Louy Benjamin	Not known	376	INFOBOIS	Not known	605	Unallocated	
252	CEB/FCBM*	THANRY	377	INFOBOIS	Not known	606	Unallocated	
253	Eurobois	Not known	378	EKOMI OYE	Not known	607	Omar Bongo	Not known
254	CEB	THANRY	379	FOBO	MALAYSIAN	608	Emame Ava	Not known
255	Lutexo/Soforga	European	380	EKONE	Not known	608	TAKO	Not known
256	IBG	Not known	381	SOFORGA	European	609	FORET	Not known
257	MORVAN	Not known	382	SOFORGA	European	610	IWENGA	Not known
260	OBTG	Not known	383	CFA	Not known			
263	Malaga Tendangoye	Not known	384	NSG	European			
264	Boutitou Boutitou Jean J	Not known	385	EKANG	Not known			
265	Rougier Gabon/FOL*	ROUGIER	386	LEROY	SONAE			
266	Bouabanga Christian/MIGOLET*	Not known	387	LUTEXFO	European			
268	Coye-Mambenda S.C.	Not known	388	CFG	Not known			
269	CEB	THANRY	389	CFG	Not known			
270	Eurobois	Not known	390	SEEF	Not known			
271	Eurobois	Not known	391	LUTEXFO	European			
272	Kassa Mapi Emile	Not known	392	CFG	Not known			
273	Leroy Gabon	SONAE	393	SBL	European			
274	Fobak	Not known	394	LUTEXFO	European			
275	Rougier Gabon/EDL*	ROUGIER	395	SBL	European			
277	Ayito Minko Veronique	Not known	396	MALEKOU	Not known			
278	Nguema Metoule Jean M	Not known	397	CHARBONNIER	Not known			
279	Louy Benjamin	Not known	398	MENDOME	Not known			
280	Guibinga Germaine	Not known	399	MABIKA	Not known			
283	LEFLEM	Not known	400	ROG	ROUGIER			
284	Gnangui Leontine	Not known	401	SBNG	Not known			
285	Ratanga Sylvestre	Not known	402	SBNG	Not known			
286	BOUSSAMBA	Not known	404	NZOUBA	Not known			
287	BOUSSAMBA	Not known	405	MANGONGO	Not known			
288	BOUSSAMBA	Not known	406	LIGNABOU	Not known			
290	BOUSSAMBA	Not known	407	CFG	Not known			
291	BOUSSAMBA	Not known	408	CFG	Not known			
293	BOUSSAMBA	Not known	409	SFM	Not known			
294	BOUSSAMBA	Not known	410	BASSO TIMBER	European			
295	CBG	Not known	411	SOFITRA	Not known			
297	Ndong Engone Jean	Not known	412	BASSO TIMBER	European			

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