



How certified forest management can socially impact the lives of the Congo Basin's habitants

In the Congo Basin, certified forest management is a major asset in reducing poverty, while improving education and strengthening community development.



Free computer classes © Interholco

The Congo Basin is home to the second largest contiguous block of tropical rainforest in the world with more than 300 million hectares, including about 200 million hectares of dense and humid forest, in which more than 125 million people live.

The mission of Fair&Precious forest managers is to contribute to respecting and improving the lives of local residents and employees of certified forest companies through sustainable forest management in Africa.

Here are some examples of their actions:

"A stable and fair balance of social, environmental and economic values is a distinctive feature of the certified management of tropical forests in Africa."

Ulrich Grauert, CEO, Interholco



Bambidie ©Precious Woods

Precious Woods and its cultural actions

Compagnie Equatoriale des Bois PW-CEB, a subsidiary of Precious Woods and a certified Fair&Precious forest management company, manages and operates 600,000 hectares of tropical forest in southeast Gabon, under FSC and PEFC certification (PAFC since 2018). The 650 PW-CEB employees and their families live in the "Bambidie" camp located in the heart of the forest, 30km from the nearest town and where leisure activities are very limited, especially for children.

In this context, a social life can bring well-being and entertainment to the people of these areas, including employees of forest concessions. That is why PW-CEB launched a cultural project in 2016, consisting of the creation of a cultural centre equipped with a library. From the beginning of the project, the company made the people involved aware that such a mission could only succeed if it was led, supported and implemented by the entire local community. To guarantee this important support, a Cultural Committee, composed of volunteers, was created to carry out this innovative project in Bambidie.



Bambidie ©Stadelmann/Precious Woods

Since its inception, the Cultural Committee began by organizing cinema screenings to broadcast the African Cup of Nations matches to the general public. The first major event was the organisation of a fair for the children of the Bambidie primary school and the co-organisation of the annual Christmas 2016 concert. These events have now become a key part of the Bambidie cultural calendar.

From the very first events, organised in 2016 (film evenings, football matches, etc.), the local population was very enthusiastic and generated demand for other leisure activities, for both adults and children, of which there are many in Bambidia. Following this very encouraging start, the Cultural Committee planned and built the first Bambidie playground, inaugurated in early 2017. On the strength of these successes, the Cultural Committee laid the foundations for what would become the Cultural Centre, whose construction was completed at the end of 2017. The centre has two large rooms: the first has a library and computers with internet access, the second is reserved for various events.



Bambidie ©Precious Woods

Today, the Cultural Centre has become the epicentre of local recreational life. Activities such as singing, dancing, theatre and drawing workshops take place there; weddings are celebrated there and there are even reading classes.

Interholco and its work with indigenous populations

Interholco is another Fair&Precious operator that manages more than one million hectares of FSC-certified forest in the northern part of the Republic of Congo. More than 16,000 people depend on Interholco's business, which directly employs 1,000 people. As part of the social team working in the field, Chancelle Gelvie NGUIMBI-KILENDO is a cartographer whose task is to regularly visit the villages concerned in order to consult local communities and indigenous populations.

In 2016, Interholco held more than 300 meetings with local communities, amounting to 4,180 women and 4,790 men, 43% of them indigenous, for a total of more than 8,900 inhabitants. In accordance with the principle of Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC), Chancelle Gelvie ensures that all members of the same village are consulted on any issue that may impact their lives: building houses, roads, wildlife protection, participatory mapping, in order to identify and mark the trees to be protected, etc.

Chancelle Gelvie's missions, with the help of local populations, include locating and protecting sacred or medically significant trees. In 2016, 71 sites were identified and placed under protection for their sacred value.

Certified forest management has only a limited impact on biomass, as less than one tree is harvested per hectare, based on the management plan, which provides for a 30 year rotation cycle.

Fair&Precious, the umbrella brand for forest certification

An umbrella brand created at the initiative of the ATIBT, Fair&Precious aims to promote forest certification in tropical regions. Thus, by highlighting the virtues of FSC and PEFC-PAFC certifications, ATIBT aims to educate and inform both local communities and key market players.

"It is indeed essential that everyone be aware of the virtues of these certifications, particularly in terms of regulating poaching and the harvesting of trees.

Today, if approximately 5 million hectares of forests are already certified as sustainable management in the Congo Basin, we are convinced that this area can be significantly increased thanks to the Fair&Precious brand and the enhancement of FSC and PAFC-PEFC certifications," says Benoit Jobbé Duval, Executive Director of ATIBT.



Chancelle Gelvie NGUIMBI-KILENDO (à droite)
©Interholco



Des enfants à l'école ©Fair&Precious

About

The ATIBT (International Tropical Timber Technical Association) was founded in 1951 at the request of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). At the service of the "tropical timber" sector, from the forest to the final consumer, the association plays a leading role in the implementation of international projects dedicated to the sustainable and responsible management of tropical forests. It is also one of the best technical and scientific references on tropical timber resources. In 2016, ATIBT experienced a nearly 50% increase in the number of members, bringing its membership to over 140. Alongside European actors in the "African tropical timber" sector, the ATIBT brings together states (Republic of Congo, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic), NGOs (such as WWF and the Prince Albert II Foundation) and large companies. www.fair-and-precious.org

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