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FSC ON THE GROUND: STORIES FROM THE FORESTS

BOOKS IN THE BASIN – REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

FSC Communications Officer ESTELLE DUCROQUET has just returned from the Congo Basin. This is her account from Ngombe, one of the sites she visited.

Audrey Mampouya Louaza has one of the most important jobs in the world: she runs a library in the workers' camp of Ngombe, tucked away in the rainforests of the Congo Basin.

Ngombe, near the town of Ouessou in the north of the Republic of the Congo, grew around people working for the forestry company, Industrie Forestière d'Ouessou (IFO), a Danzer Group subsidiary. The Congo Basin is the largest tropical forest area after the Amazon, and IFO's concessions there cover some 1.16 million hectares (ha).

IFO received FSC certification in 2009. However, in May 2013, FSC disassociated from the Danzer Group and therefore from IFO too. The disassociation followed a complaint by Greenpeace against Danzer for unacceptable activities by a former Danzer subsidiary. FSC, satisfied that the offending issues have now been addressed, has re-associated with Danzer, including IFO and other subsidiaries.

Ngombe is now home to more than 8,000 people, including about 900 IFO employees and people who work in secondary businesses, such as food suppliers. In line with FSC certification standards on social investment, IFO has supported the provision of facilities including a hospital, police station and school. And now it has a library. Audrey worked in human resources management at IFO before she was asked to manage the library when it was set up two years ago. After training with a librarian in Ouessou, she initiated a range of community activities, including drawing and poetry writing competitions, and computer training twice a week.

"I have discovered a passion for this job," she says. Her library now holds 8,533 books, as well as a bank of computers, donated by AGIRabcd, an association of mostly retired French teachers, and Interholco/Danzer. Its visitors have included the French Ambassador.

The library is a vital door to knowledge and learning for the local residents, in an area where many people have never had access to books and where there is very little access to the Internet. Audrey is particularly pleased that the library has become a popular hangout for the village children. In fact, her main concern is that adults tend to not take part in many of the activities she organizes, although more are borrowing books these days.



Audrey in the library in Ngombe.

Jobs for all

Madeleine Azoussi Mougabio can see the library from her home. Her middle son Paul, aged 16, is a regular visitor to the library and Madeleine is pleased that he takes his studying seriously. Her eldest son, aged 19, is already at law school in Ouessou and her 12-year-old son is in junior high school.

Madeleine, who comes from Pointe-Noire in southern Congo, continued a proud family tradition of women working in 'men's jobs' by training as a mechanic at the age of 20. In line with her husband's wishes, however, she stopped working when she got married.



Madeleine in action.

But when her husband died several years ago, she began working again to support herself and her sons. She is now a mechanic with IFO. Through this job, she has bought five parcels of land near Pointe-Noire. She plans to build a home for herself on one plot, rent out one, and give one to each of her sons so that they can provide for their own families in the future. "My next goal is to buy materials to build my own house," she says.

Growing with Danzer

Audrey and Madeleine are well aware that, in one way or another, life here revolves around the forest. They also know that their prospects have improved now that its products will once again carry the FSC label.

Jean-Noël Pindi-Mudi, manager of the sawmill at IFO, explains how this affected the people in Ngombe: "We were very proud of having FSC certification and when we lost it, it was like losing someone from the family."

Jean-Noël, who is from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), has been with Danzer for 32 years. He is known by the employees as "the ambassador" for migrant workers from the DRC. When he joined IFO 14 years ago, he lived with 15 other migrant workers. Today, he lives in his own comfortable home, which he built himself.

He has seven children, aged from 10 to 24 years, and recently became a grandfather – and the child was named Aurélien Danzer. "You have all grown with Danzer," he tells his children. "And you and your own children will keep growing with Danzer."



Jean-Noël at the sawmill.

INCREASING INCOMES IN INDONESIA

FSC Communications Manager LISA SMYTH visited a smallholders' co-op in Jombang in the East Java Province of Indonesia. She came back with this story.

A schoolbag hangs on the lime-green walls of Sri Wahyuningtyas's home in the village of Wonosalam, in Indonesia's Jombang district. The only photograph on display is of Sri W. with her church group members, but it's her five-year-old son's school backpack that has pride of place.

That's because of the great value Sri W. places on education. With her income bolstered by earnings from her job in the Sengon Agung Bersama Cooperative, she has been able to buy a second cow. And she knows that she'll be able to send her son, as well as the child she is carrying, to the best schools.

The co-op, set up in 2010, is supported by a grant from the FSC Smallholder Fund. FSC recognizes that smallholders, family forest owners and forest communities are key stakeholders in responsible forest management. As individuals, and even as ill-equipped groups, they would never be able to obtain FSC certification. But through its Smallholder Support Program, FSC can help groups of smallholders to overcome the many challenges they face in meeting the requirements of becoming FSC certified.



Sri. W shows that the forest is pesticide-free.

Sri W. has been a member of the co-op since the start, but she wanted to be more involved. She joined the staff in the administration section and was trained in financial and computer skills, which she now passes on to members of her church group.

The co-op has 129 members, of which 24 are women. Sri is one of two female staff members; there are five men on the staff. She's happy because she has more income and new skills now, and she's also enjoying the gender equality in the co-op. "It doesn't matter that I am a woman. We are treated and paid the same," she says.

Room to grow

The co-op's members come from 11 sub-villages. On their collective 201 ha of FSC-certified forest, they grow teak, mahogany, sengon and gmelina. With FSC smallholder funding, the co-op has built 12 wells, securing a clean, stable water supply for the village. The wells also mean the smallholders have water for their trees and plants, even during the dry season. The co-op used the funding to buy safety helmets and shoes as well. It improved the quality of its management through training, which, in turn, will help improve the quality of the timber. With the FSC funding, all members get free seed and are trained in growing their trees without pesticides.

There has already been substantial growth. In 2013, revenue was 457,000 Indonesian rupiah (around US\$40), up from 239,000 rupiah in 2012. It takes five years to get to the harvesting stage for the trees, and the villagers are selling seedlings in the meantime.

The company PT Sejahtera Usaha Bersama (PT SUB) financially supports the co-op by assisting with obtaining seedlings and buying timber from the smallholders. FSC timber here is used mostly for plywood for general housing. For PT SUB, its support of an FSC-certified cooperative is a way to ease entry into the European and US markets.

Benefits for all

Fellow co-op member Supriyo grows trees on 800 square meters (0.08 ha) of forest. He also heads a village-level office, which meets once a month to discuss community issues. He was elected to his position in 2010 and is very proud of being a community leader. Supriyo keeps all the office files in his home, in the sideboard under a heart-shaped clock.

Supriyo, along with the other co-op members, is very pleased that the local and national governments have acknowledged their involvement in sustainable forest management. The forest is their world and they are delighted to show it off. But to be sustainable, they realized that they had to learn to do things differently.

There is a productive area and a conservation area to ensure diversity. All the trees are tagged in line with the monitoring and evaluation side of the members' training, and will be harvested only when they reach the correct height. It is clear that a system is in place and that it's working.

From his profits from the co-op, Supriyo bought two goats to add to his herd (which now totals six animals). But he's so busy in the village office that he had to ask his neighbor, Sri Wahyuni, to look after four of them; they then share the profits from the goats' milk and meat. Arrangements like this, he points out, mean that all the villagers benefit from the co-op – even those who are not members. And the co-op itself would not be successful without FSC support.



Supriyo and his neighbor both benefit from the co-op.

A CAT, A TREE AND FSC – PORTUGAL

FSC International Board Member TONY SEBASTIAN brought two examples of FSC certification at work back from a visit to Portugal.

Portugal's cork forests do more than provide half of the world's cork. They also provide a livelihood for thousands of people and, in the remaining rabbit-rich original areas, are a home for the Iberian lynx. This is the world's most critically endangered cat. In 1960, about 4,000 of these cats roamed the Mediterranean cork forests; now there are fewer than 500.

About 38% of mainland Portugal is forested, with the cork oak (*Quercus suber*) a major species. But natural Iberian forests, with their iconic lynx and cork oak, have been largely replaced by human-modified forests with a far smaller diversity of species.

Cork oak only grows on the Iberian Peninsula and in northwest Africa. It's the bark that is harvested – a spongy, pleasant material that floats and doesn't burn. You may have encountered it as the stopper for a bottle of good wine.

The trees are protected by law and by the communities that rely on them for income. But there are two issues with using cork. Because it comes from such a small part of the world, supply is vulnerable to several threats; and producing cork on a commercial scale, in the way it has been done in the past, threatens a range of species – including the lynx.

Over each cork tree's 200-year lifespan, its bark is cut, left to regenerate for nine years, and then cut again on a continuous cycle so the tree doesn't die. But the forests have lost other naturally occurring trees. Years of 'managing' these forests for their most valuable trees have seen only the cork oaks remaining. Other native trees and – most importantly for rabbits and their predators – the shrubby vegetation has disappeared. These three components – an endemic tree of high value; a nearly extinct wild cat; and a community evolved around producing and caring for a global commodity – sit somewhat uncomfortably together.

Enter FSC. Achieving FSC certification brings together these three parts of the equation – forests, wildlife and people – by design. Certification is built around principles of sustainability and promotes the whole package, not just one aspect. So, in Portugal, it considers the fact that we are dealing with a natural product and enhances both its value and its intrinsic character – the Iberian forests should have lynx walking in them. An FSC certificate also means a complete array of processes are in place, from the legality of land tenure to best practices, and from preserving key attributes of nature to protecting the rights of workers.

As consumers and retailers continue to choose FSC-labeled cork products, and as cork's uses are increasing (reportedly even to spacecraft), the delightful cork forests will remain. The people who have worked cork forests for generations will maintain a livelihood, as well as a proud history. And while the lynx will struggle for a while, sustainable forest management will continue to restore its habitats. There is hope for its future.



The bark from a cork oak is harvested every nine years.

Finding peace in the forest

Bussaco, just north of that great university of antiquity, Coimbra, offers a fascinating example of FSC certification at work. It is a 100 ha walled forest dating back to 1094 when Carmelite monks, seeking isolation and meditation, built a collection of cottages – and planted trees. With Portugal's great age of discovery bringing new things to Europe, more plants arrived from the furthest reaches of the world. By the 17th century, a convent emerged and an arboretum of global scope took shape. An ethereal royal hunting lodge – a palace – came later.

Today, Bussaco is virtually unchanged from these ancient origins. To stay at the palace is to go back in time. Walking the forest trails and gardens is meditative and observing the work of the foundation is educational. Redwoods and Douglas firs from the New World stand next to eucalyptus from Australasia; ferns from North Africa frame pines from Mexico.

Bussaco is run by a foundation and the basic tenets of forest management are alluringly captured here. When a tree falls, its wood is used, for example to create souvenirs for visitors. Clean water from numerous forest streams sustains surrounding communities and farmlands. Wildlife – fish, birds and plants largely lost in the outside world – find refuge here. Your payment to stay at the palace goes towards managing the forests.

In short, everything works in a cycle through which the forest is maintained and improved. People, both locals and visitors, benefit in every way. And Bussaco has an FSC certificate that proves this. It is a robust certificate, subjected to robust processes. This little spot on our planet encapsulates the essence of sustainability. This is what FSC is about: bringing people together and delivering good to society.

FSC, CANADA AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

From over 10,000 people to fewer than 600 in a few decades ... FSC Director General KIM CARSTENSEN tells the story of an indigenous population decimated by contact with Westerners, who are now using FSC certification as part of their comeback strategy.

Imagine strangers conquering your home, abusing your environment and bringing a fatal disease to your community. That's what happened to the Haida people.

Living in the archipelago of Haida Gwaii, off the north coast of British Columbia, Canada, they are a group of indigenous natives thought to have dwelled there for at least 8,000 years. Sadly, the Haida society has experienced first-hand the collapse of their population and the subsequent takeover of their territories for quick extraction of forest resources.

But they have come back strongly. In August 2014, I was fortunate enough to travel to the islands and meet the Haida people. Here, I learnt more about their story – past and present.

Historically, the Haida people managed their land responsibly: a seafaring nation who respected the forests, only collecting small amounts of berries, cedar, spruce and hemlock for their houses and totem poles. But in 1862, Westerners brought smallpox to their islands, and over the next forty years, more than nine out of ten Haida people died of the disease. The Haida moved into two small villages, their islands were colonized and they became the target of a brutal extraction of forest resources. The stripping of trees from the watersheds led to the pollution of salmon-spawning areas and the decimation of bird populations.

Throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, there were many conflicts and clashes between the parties. But eventually, the Haida people organized themselves and regained the rights to their land. They reconstituted their community and began managing the land sustainably. Haida Gwaii is now home to a flourishing FSC-certified forest operation.

FSC certification is one of the tools the Haida people now use to manage their land. It fits with their tradition of protecting the forests they use and suits the way they want to live. Inside the production forest, there are areas of protected land, and half of the islands have been set aside as a World Heritage Site to completely protect large areas of the original forest.

From devastated and colonized to bursting with indigenous pride, the Haida people can again protect their age-old land. They even continue to develop and use their old symbols and carvings.

The rights of indigenous peoples, like the Haida, are becoming a front-of-mind issue in Canada. In June 2014, a Supreme Court ruling was passed in Canada. The province of British Columbia had granted a commercial logging license on land considered by the indigenous Tsilhqot'in Nation to be part of their traditional territory. The ruling declared the Aboriginal title over the area requested should be granted, setting a new footing for the rights of indigenous peoples across Canada and further afield.

Respecting the rights of these groups is crucial to managing forests effectively. FSC's certification system honors indigenous rights – we have even set up the Permanent Indigenous Peoples' Committee (PIPC), working globally



A totem pole of the Haida people.

to advise our board on issues important to indigenous groups. That is why so many indigenous peoples choose to work with FSC.

FSC's management system guarantees the rights of local groups, specifically their right to free, prior and informed consent. We're currently in the process of testing how this can work even better in the new FSC standard for Canada.

This new standard will ensure Canadian indigenous groups are informed of, and involved in, decisions about their land. With FSC's help, it's hoped that indigenous peoples in Canada, and across the world, can better protect the land they own, while managing their forests responsibly.

LETTING NATURE RUN ITS COURSE

EDGARD AVEZUM JUNIOR, Commercial Director at Klabin, shares a touching story from the company's forests in Brazil.

From the sky, Klabin's forests look like an intricate and beautiful mosaic in all shades of green. In many senses, that's just what they are: vast tracts of planted pine and eucalyptus meshed with arteries of natural forest.

Scores of species, some endangered, roam the protected corridors that the natural forest provides. Among them are more than 100 pumas (*Puma concolor*), the largest cats in the Americas after the jaguar. That was at the last count, and it's likely that there are more now.

Once, pumas ranged across the Americas as far north as the Rocky Mountains. Today, they are limited to the remaining forests, like the unbroken expanses in Klabin's forests. These kings of the mountains, also known as cougars or mountain lions, don't stay in the natural forest, of course; the entire mosaic is their playground. They live and breed freely here.



Puma cubs in Brazil. © Klabin, Vlamir José Rocha

On two occasions (that the company knows of) pumas created dens for their cubs in the planted areas – in the direct pathway of harvesters. On both occasions, Klabin's stringent environmental requirements – which align 100% with FSC requirements – saw operations halt entirely until the cubs' mothers returned to collect them.

Klabin is Brazil's largest manufacturer of pulp and paper products, and its forests stretch through three states: Paraná, Santa Catarina to the south of Paraná, and São Paulo to the north. Brazilian legislation requires that the company set aside 20% as preserved forest, but Klabin exceeds that by well over 100%.

Klabin's largest forests are in Paraná, where 141,000 ha of a total of 345,000 ha are preserved forests. Here, the forests are a habitat for about half of the state's animal species; it teems with more than 750 animal species and 1,129 plant species.

FSC certification took place in 1998 (Paraná), 2004 (Santa Catarina) and 2009 (São Paulo). It's an important commercial tool for the company, differentiating it from players that do not adhere to sustainable practices.

It's also a perfect fit. FSC's requirements stipulate that as part of pre-harvest activities, sites and areas of reproduction for rare animals and animals under threat of extinction are identified, and steps taken to protect

them. This is the way that Klabin manages its forests and it's something that its people are very proud of. They know that what sustains the puma's habitat is simply the visible part of the iceberg of the forestry principles that it applies in its operations.

The people of Klabin are particularly proud of the two cases of puma cubs being saved and reunited with their mothers. The first took place in a eucalyptus plantation in Paraná in November 2004. Harvesting was due to begin and scouts went out to scan the area to ensure that everything was in order. They found two cubs, barely a month old, hidden in a den. Their mother was away, probably looking for food. As cubs are born blind, they are completely dependent on their mothers at first.

Harvesting was immediately suspended and the crew withdrew from the area. This is important: even though female pumas are fiercely protective of their young, there is a chance that a mother will abandon her young if she smells humans. Two days later, the mother returned and took her cubs into the forest.

The second incident took place exactly a year later, this time in a pine plantation. Again, two cubs, less than a month old, were found. Again, all harvesting operations were suspended. And after three days, the mother came back to the den and collected her cubs.

Pumas are at the top of the food chain and need a large, quiet habitat for hunting and survival. That they are breeding in Klabin's forests, allowing the species to thrive, is a clear sign of a healthy environment. Finding a balance between commercial activity and conservation is the foremost goal for Klabin. And the story of the pumas showcases how humans and nature can co-exist.



Klabin's forests host an abundance of wildlife. © Klabin, Vlamir José Rocha