

February 2007

CONCESSIONS TO POVERTY

The environmental, social and economic impacts of industrial logging concessions in Africa's rainforests



SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

- Evidence for the economic *benefits* of industrial tropical logging is very scant. Rather, the evidence suggests that the industrial timber concession model is inherently anti-poor.
- Where logging is undertaken in situations of conflict or corruption it exacerbates these, and tends to be particularly environmentally and socially damaging
- Experience from around the world indicates that industrial logging in tropical forests has serious negative impacts on the environment, even if selective logging is practiced.
- This experience also shows that industrial logging is harmful to those people living in and adjacent to tropical forests – with severe impacts on local livelihoods, cultures and health.
- Existing laws and institutions are overly focused on 'elite' economic interests, neglecting environmental, social or developmental concerns.
- The ongoing international and regional policy processes have not undertaken a sufficiently critical look at the role of industrial logging within the forest sector, but rather, are reinforcing the existing 'presumption in favour of industrial logging', along with existing structural and power imbalances.
- Reduced impact logging has the potential to ameliorate the environmental effects of timber extraction, but the lack of enforcement of environmental regulations means that these methods are unlikely to be widely applied in the Congo Basin.

Recommendations

- The rights and concerns of local communities to land and forest resources need to be recognised in law, and these rights respected.
- Further capacity building among local communities is required, aimed at ensuring their effective participation in negotiations over forest rights and improving the generation and communication of information about forest rights and uses.
- Existing environmental and social provisions in laws and regulations relating to forestry need to be enforced.
- A critical analysis of the structural economic problems of industrial logging on tropical rainforests should be undertaken.
- Alternatives to industrial logging in tropical rainforests need to be explored, with greater focus on local forest benefits and values.
- A definition of 'conflict timber' is needed, and this used to apply trade sanctions in appropriate circumstances.
- Responsibility for forest management should be separated from that for timber extraction activities.

PREFACE

The Democratic Republic of Congo and civil society involvement in the report process

Given that this report has as one of its aims to influence policy processes and discussions in the DRC in particular, including input from Congolese voices has been an important part of the process.

In the first place, some of the articles in the report are written by Congolese contributors: these can be found in chapters 2 and 3.

Secondly, the report was reviewed and commented upon by a large group of Congolese civil society organisations, who made a series of recommendations based on their reading of the report and who contributed, collectively, to the introduction to DRC's context which follows below. This work was carried out through a workshop held in Kinshasa in February 2006, and followed up through email discussions with the workshop participants and others. Their editions and suggestions for improvement of the report itself were taken into account and their recommendations for the future management of forests have been included with those of the authors in Chapter 7.

The context of DRC

DRC is emerging from many years of conflict, and its forests and forest policies are in chaos. Already, there are many areas being logged now whose titles were allocated in the period of dictatorship under conditions that were far from transparent. Often, the management of these logging areas has been extremely poor and there have been serious impacts on the local environment.

Forest communities are facing terrible difficulties, particularly communities of indigenous peoples, who face discrimination and marginalisation. All communities have problems of poverty and those who have witnessed timber exploitation have also experienced additional problems including family breakdown, erosion of traditional cultures and health problems. There has been tremendous frustration as communities perceive that companies are not respecting the promises made in their "cahiers des charges" and there are many conflicts over land and resources. Very few communities are aware of their rights under Congolese law and the law itself, as concerns forests, is incomplete.

The Forest Code of 2002 was passed by a government that was extremely weak and under pressure from external donors. The law was based on a model of forest exploitation that did not consider the context of the country itself and that was far too focussed on timber extraction. The capacity of the government to manage its forests is very limited and there is a real need for communities, civil society and government to increase their capacities to plan, manage, monitor and control forest use before any irreversible decisions are taken.

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PREVIOUS REPORTS IN THE SERIES:

Concessions to Poverty is the 5th in a series that looks at the social, environmental, economic and political impact of the forest and mining sectors.

High Stakes: The need to control transnational logging companies; A Malaysian case study. August 1998. By the World Rainforest Foundation and Forests Monitor

Undermining the Forests: The need to control transnational mining companies: A Canadian case study. January 2000 By the World Rainforest Movement and the Forest People Programme

Sold Down the River: The need to control transnational logging companies; A European case study. March 2001. By Forests Monitor

Forest Management, Transparency, Governance and the Law: Case studies from the Congo Basin. October 2003. By CED, Rainforest Foundation UK and Forests Monitor

The border design is based on the patterns found in the traditional cloth made by the Kuba people from the Kasai river region in Southeast Democratic Republic of the Congo. Thanks to the Kuba peoples for providing the inspiration and the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, UK for providing images.

Front cover: The benefits of the timber industry by passing the local people. Filip Verbelen, Greenpeace Belgium

Inside front cover: Roads are built but there is no increase in income in farm gate prices for the poor farmers. Kjell Kuhne, Rainforest Foundation

Back cover: New road construction without consultation or consent. Theophile Gata, CENADEP

Back inside cover: Validation of the final map of a community mapping exercise, DRC. Cath Long, Rainforest Foundation

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By the Rainforest Foundation UK and Forests Monitor

Edited by Simon Counsell, Cath Long and Stuart Wilson

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