Green Ologbo: Development of a new concession in an integrated project for sustainable palm oil production

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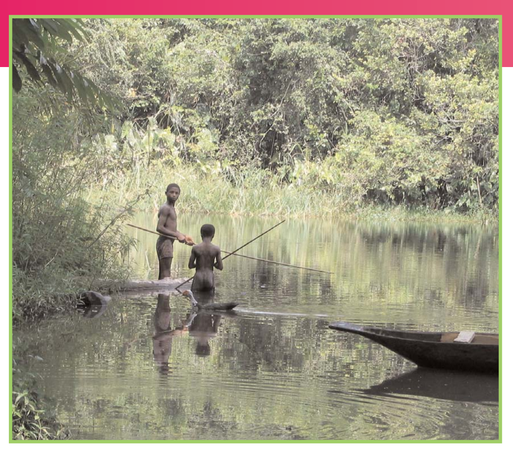


Fishing in the Ogba river surrounding the concession. © A Verwilghen, 2006

Presco Plc, a member of the SIAT Group, is a company operating in Nigeria producing and processing palm oil for the domestic market. The company plans to implement a sustainable project for new oil palm development on about 10,000 ha of land in Edo State. In line with the RSPO initiative, it aims to promote biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services, and enhance local development and social wellbeing. Feedback from this project will make a contribution to field testing, for implementation of the principles and criteria related to the responsible development of new plantings.

Presentation of the project

Main objectives and progress so far

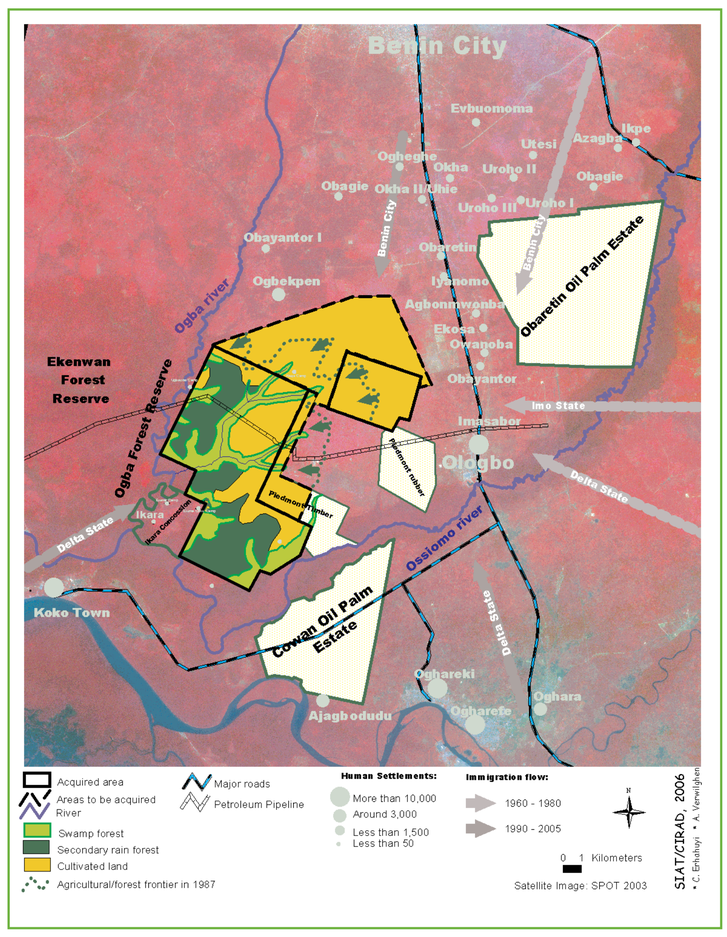
The company, in collaboration with CIRAD, has investigated the agricultural capacity of the area and addressed social and environmental concerns, with emphasis on High Conservation Value identification. Environmental and social impact assessments have been carried out. A land-use map and a conservation action plan will be issued. Local development will be enhanced, notably through social actions and an outgrowers scheme. Ecological and socio-economic monitoring will be ensured.

Methodology

To assess the foreseeable impact of Presco's extension and to identify potential measures that could lessen negative impacts and enhance positive impacts, it seemed important to:

- Assess the agricultural capacity of the concession,
- Identify its conservation value (exceptional or critical ecological attributes, ecosystem services, social functions),
- Understand local environmental exploitation dynamics.

Biophysical and ethno-ecological approaches were combined and outside expertise was called in.



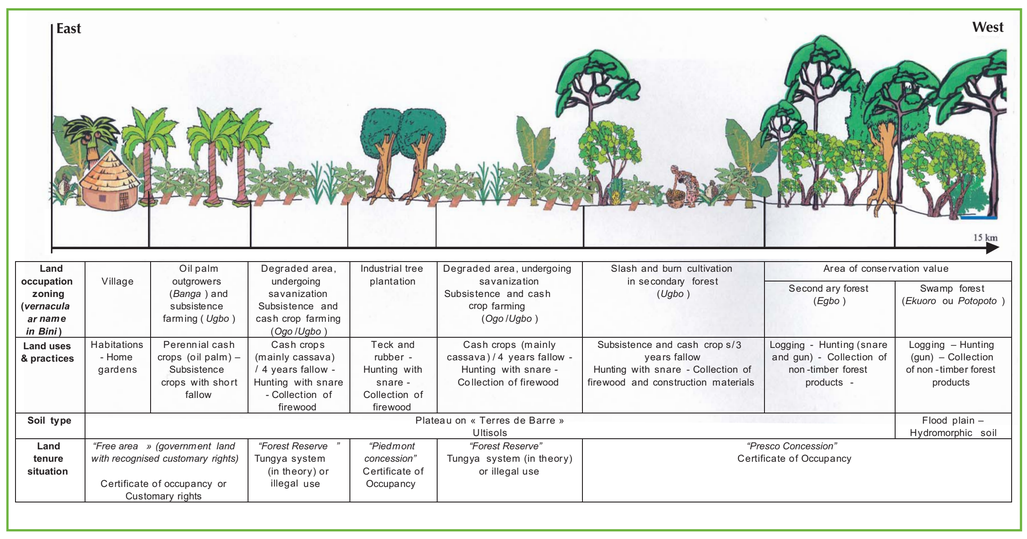
Soil observation. © A Verwilghen, 2005

Presco Plc
Ologbo Project
Natural Environment and Socio-economic Dynamics - 2005

Overview of the natural environment and socio-economic dynamics

- A complex and differentiated human environment, with high land pressure,
- A territory divided into two zones:
  - The northern area, cultivated lands of very low conservation value but good agricultural capacity,
  - The southern area, partly covered with degraded secondary rain forest and wetlands, still hosting valuable biodiversity but threatened by over-logging and farming encroachment.
- Presco activities will lead to considerable changes in the socio-economic and natural environment, both positive and negative.

With strong support from all stakeholders and their involvement in the project, it may be an opportunity for conservation of the Ologbo forest.



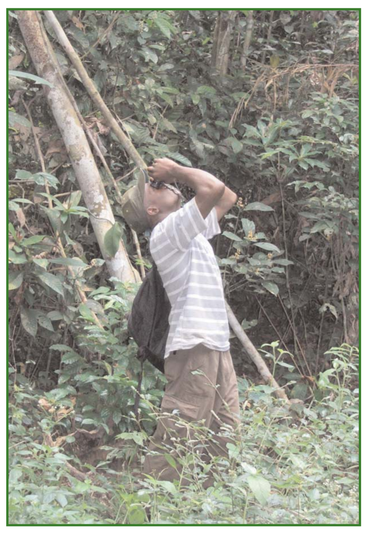
Land occupation zoning (*vernacular name in Bini*)	Village	Oil palm outgrowers (*Banga*) and subsistence farming (*Ugbo*)	Degraded area, undergoing savanization Subsistence and cash crop farming (*Ogo* /*Ugbo*)	Industrial tree plantation	Degraded area, undergoing savanization Subsistence and cash crop farming (*Ogo* /*Ugbo*)	Slash and burn cultivation in secondary forest (*Ugbo*)	Area of conservation value	
							Second ary forest (*Egbo*)	Swamp forest (*Ekuoro* ou *Potopoto*)
Land uses & practices	Habitations - Home gardens	Perennial cash crops (oil palm) – Subsistence crops with short fallow	Cash crops (mainly cassava) / 4 years fallow - Hunting with snare - Collection of firewood	Teck and rubber - Hunting with snare - Collection of firewood	Cash crops (mainly cassava) / 4 years fallow - Hunting with snare - Collection of firewood	Subsistence and cash crop s/3 years fallow Hunting with snare - Collection of firewood and construction materials	Logging - Hunting (snare and gun) - Collection of non -timber forest products -	Logging – Hunting (gun) – Collection of non -timber forest products
Soil type	Plateau on « Terres de Barre » Ultisols							Flood plain – Hydromorphic soil
Land tenure situation	*"Free area » (government land with recognised customary rights)* Certificate of occupancy or Customary rights		*"Forest Reserve "* Tungya system (in theory) or illegal use	*"Piedmont concession"* Certificate of Occupancy	*"Forest Reserve"* Tungya system (in theory) or illegal use	*"Presco Concession"* Certificate of Occupancy		

Implementation of the RSPO "Principles and Criteria" (P&C)

The elements tested concern Principle 7 "Responsible development of new plantings", but also related criteria in Principles 2, 5 and 6.

Data gathering for impact assessment and HCV identification

- Formal Environmental Impact Assessments are not sufficient to comply with RSPO P&C,
- Biodiversity assessments are difficult to carry out: lack of existing data, time and human resources needed for baselines surveys,
- Participatory mapping exercises may amplify disputes about land issues.



Bird survey. © A Verwilghen, 2006

Decision-making and implementation

- Land issues are not easy to tackle when it comes to overlapping between legal and customary rights,
- Knowledge about landscape ecology and conservation biology is often lacking for decision making on landscaping for environmental and conservation purposes: riparian buffer zone width, size and shape of wildlife corridors or refuges, population viability characteristics, etc,
- The roles and responsibilities of oil palm growers in conservation matters must be clarified,
- Monitoring: indicators are lacking.

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Conclusion

Most areas covered by the P&C are clearly addressed in the guidance document, but some topics need clearer definition or targets, with local adaptation. The biggest issues are related to biodiversity assessment, land tenure and the participatory process. There is a strong need for indicators and thresholds for decision-making.

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