



Cercle pour la Sauvegarde
des Ressources Naturelles



Restoration and sustainable management of sacred forests of the RAMSAR sites 1017 and 1018 in Benin

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Satoyama Initiative Regional Workshop in Africa
Accra, Ghana | August 2015

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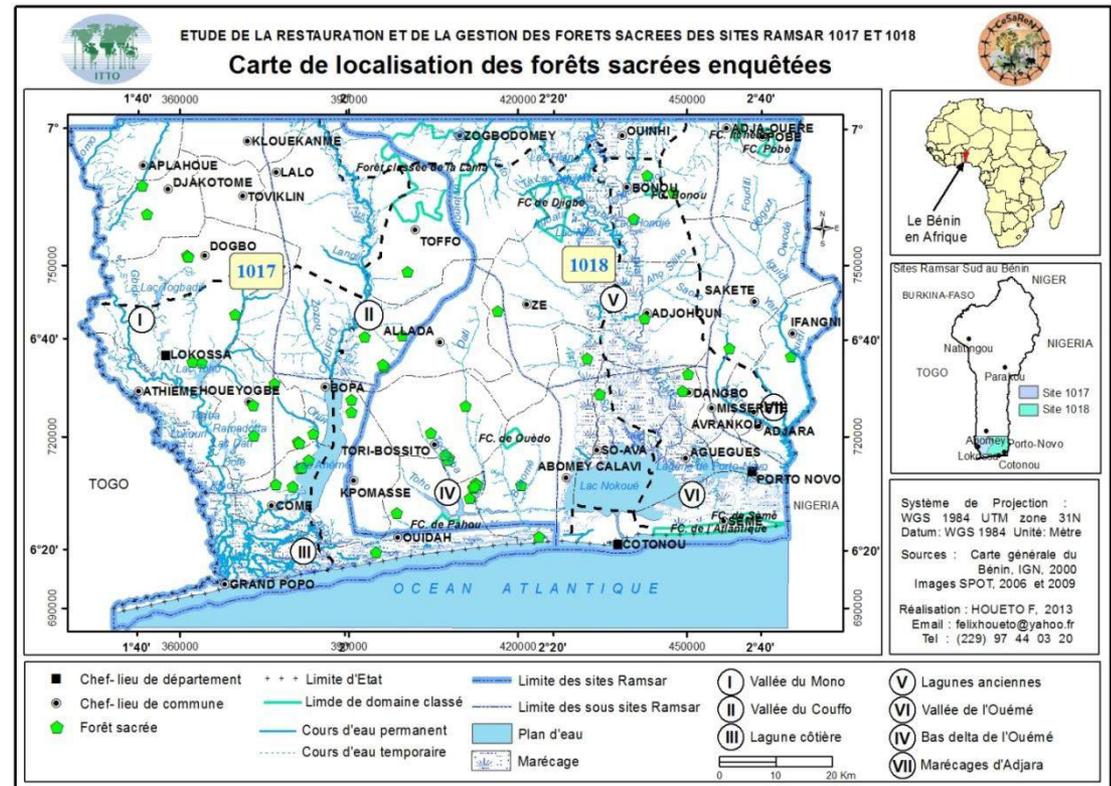
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Introduction

- Benin is a country with an area of 122,600 square kilometers located in West Africa and containing approximately 2940 sacred forests covering an area of 18,360 hectares
- The RAMSAR Sites 1017 and 1018 of Benin contain more than 500 sacred forests (SF) of small area ranging from 2 to 20 ha.
- Forty of these forests have been selected for this activity.



Importance of sacred forests

- As an integral part of the landscape, sacred forests play a vital role to local population through three important functions:
 - ecological (protection of water sources, preventing soil erosion, providing a habitat for animals and plants, bank of seeds and genetic reservoirs),
 - socio-economical function (provide wood for multiple purpose, medicinal plants, food, NTFP, acting as a cemetery, providing places of initiation and blessing).
 - religious function and cultural function (providing shelter for deities, acting as places of worship, rituals or other ceremonies, sources of traditional knowledge),
- They represent a successful model of traditional sustainable management and conservation of the biodiversity
- The principle of this method of conservation is based on fear and respect for traditional local beliefs, the strength of traditional authorities, the power of dignitaries and religious leaders.

Introduction

- Because the power of traditional authorities within the community is weakening, taboos are no more respected. These forests are subjected to serious degradation leading sometimes to a total destruction.
- As part of the activities of IPSI, the NGO CeSaReN in collaboration with technical and financial support of International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) has implemented a pre-project for restoration and sustainable management of sacred forests of the RAMSAR sites 1017 and 1018 of Benin (PPD 165/12 Rev.1 (F)).

Objectives and explanation of the activities

- The objective is to assess the potential of sacred forests of the Ramsar 1017 and 1018 sites in order to formulate a project proposal for the rehabilitation and sustainable management of these forests.
- The mains activities implemented are:
 - Inventory of the biodiversity resources of the sacred forest to assess the richness of the forests;
 - Socioeconomic studies on the sacred forests to evaluate to importance of sacred forest in the livelihood of the owners;
 - Development of strategies for the sustainable management the sacred forests;
 - Awareness and information of stakeholders on the sustainable management approach and tools;

Results and lessons learnt

Studies conducted under this pre project have shown that the SF studied contain 17 tree species protected the National Forestry Law and 8 species on the Red List of Benin.

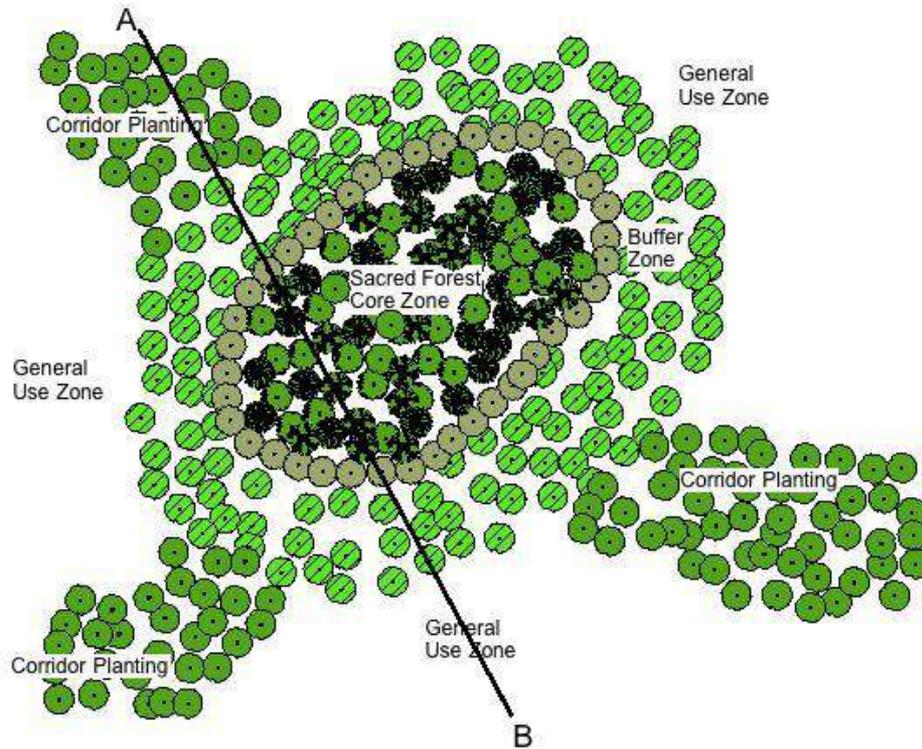
The SF contribute to the conservation of 36% of species protected by law, and 8% of threatened flora species in Benin. This confirms that the FS is a reservoir of rare and endangered species.

The implementation of this project helped raise awareness and mobilize dignitaries and owners of 40 sacred forests to implement actions for sustainable management.

The Communal Authorities of 15 Communes involved were aware and took written commitment to support on administrative and financial plan the sustainable management activities.

Modern and traditional approach can be combined to better conserve the sacred forests

Strategies for Sustainable Management of sacred forests



Strategies for Sustainable Management of sacred forests

- Strengthening the capacities of the local population to produce CITES (Convention on International Trade on Endangered Wildlife Species) species (Python, Varanus, Chameleon, turtles) to enrich the sacred forests and to improve the revenues of the local population



Strategies for Sustainable Management of sacred forests

- Strengthening the capacities of the local population for the reforestation to produce fuel wood, plots and medical plants
- Development of incomes generating activities
- Development of Ecotourism activities within the sacred forests



Perspectives

- The project “Rehabilitation and Sustainable Management of Sacred Forests on Ramsar Sites 1017 and 1018 in Benin (PD 754/14 Rev.2 (F))” is approved by ITTO and pending for funding

**Thank for your kind
attention**