Project Update: April 2021

This project aims to improve the conservation strategy of the natural forest of Dogo-Ketou with the involvement of the local population through capacity building initiatives.

As a prelude to the execution of this project, we took the administrative steps with the forest management to present our project to the forest managers and obtain their authorisation and participation in our various activities. Based on our discussions, the project was hailed as innovative and as a potential contributor to the new forest management policy that the authorities want to put in place. We also met with the village chiefs to present the objectives of the project to them and to have their support and blessings.

Fieldwork phase
For the first stage of this project, it was a question of making a floristic inventory of the forest to assess the state of this ecosystem. During our inventory work, which started in December 2020 and continued until February 2021, we installed more than 20 plots of 1 ha each. We made an exhaustive inventory with a team of four people (including members of the SOS Biodiversity NGO) including forest guards who helped to recognise the inventoried species more easily. The installation of the plots (inventory unit) was guided by the presence of three valuable species: *Afzelia Africana, Khaya senegaleensis,* and *Pterocarpus erinaceus*.

Photo 1: Trees measurement by the field team

We can retain from the exploration of the forest of Dogo-Ketou that:

- The density of trees per ha is relatively low. This is all the more normal since it is a clear forest.
- The specific richness of the forest is just as low (about 30 forest tree species identified)
- Lots of young trees with an average circumference of 41 cm. This translates to the cutting of large trees with large empty space in places. (Observations of cut tree trunks in some plots).
- Presence of agricultural areas in certain parts of the forest.
- Grazing is uncontrolled in the forest.
- Vegetation fires are frequent.

Photo 2: Pasture in the forest of Dogo-Ketou. Photo 3: Cotton cultivation in the Dogo-Ketou

The study of the populations of the species targeted for this inventory reveals that:

- *Afzelia africana*, which is a species found in the screen in this forest, is rarely found in inventory plots. The density of this species is of the order of 1 tree per ha.
- *Khaya senegalensis* was also absent in the installed plots.
- *Pterocarpus erinaceus,* which is an endangered species, has been abundantly found at the juvenile stage (small circumference) in the forest. Mature trees of this species are non-existent. This can be explained by the consequence of illegal and abusive cutting in view of the quality of the wood of this species.

Although the complete analysis of inventory data will better guide our recommendations to managers, it is already clear that in reforestation plans these native and valuable trees are the ones to be used to enhance the diversity of the forest.

Project continuation
We have planned the start of the ethnobotanical survey phase in the villages bordering this forest to achieve the results linked to objective 2 "Evaluation and promotion of different agroforestry practices in the region".