

OCTOBER 2021

SAVE THE ZIO RIVER, TOGO



Naturefriends International

PROJECT CONCEPT

For more than 10 years, Naturefriends Togo have been making an important contribution against the advancing erosion of the riverbanks, which is a massive environmental problem in this West African country. The originally existing riverine forests have been destroyed by bush fires and clearings.

In the 1980s, almost all of them were converted into coffee and cocoa fields. The situation will worsen from 1990 onwards with the excessive production of charcoal and the intensive exploitation of timber following the fall in the cost of coffee and cocoa.

The disappearance of these forest ecosystems, due to human activities, drastically reduced the biological diversity in the area. Only a few forest buffers on hard-to-reach mountain slopes and forest formations along rivers still survived. In the absence of the trees, which strengthen the soil with their roots, the embankments were gradually washed away by the river.



Aware of the problem, Case Togo carried out a reforestation programme between 2007 and 2012 on the banks of the region's waterways through reforestation work camps, thanks to Naturefriends International.

However, given the extent of the degradation of the Zio River, Togo's third longest watercourse, and the high demand for seedlings in the villages along the river, the organisation decided to undertake, with the populations concerned, a large-scale project to reforest the banks of the Zio River over ten kilometres.

By planting trees, the banks of the rivers are stabilised, and the adjoining agricultural areas are secured. In addition, the newly planted trees contribute to climate protection and help to preserve biodiversity in the region.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project was implemented in the Agou prefecture, Plateaux region of Togo over a period of 14 months (July 2020 to September 2021).

The main objectives were:

- Conservation and rehabilitation of gallery forests along the Zio River;
- Planting 10,000 seedlings over a period of one year along 10 km on both sides of the Zio River;
- Popularise and promote endangered species (iroko, mahogany, fraké, framiré, bamboo);
- Introduction of new plant varieties (Moringa, cordia, cedrela) through a voluntary and participatory community approach;
- Set up nursery teams in the three villages of the zone.



PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

To achieve these results, the project relied on a voluntary participatory approach by the inhabitants of the affected villages. In addition, the project carried out information, communication, awareness raising, and training as followed:

Awareness-raising and village training meeting

The project started with visits to the three villages (Makumavo, Missahome and Mesiobe), during which people were made aware of the importance of the riparian forests.



This was a great opportunity to explain the merits of reforestation of the banks of this river, one of the most important in Togo. A reconstitution of the gallery forest contributing to the stabilization of the banks of the watercourse, and to the lowering of the water temperature, thus fighting against evaporation.

Establishment of nurseries

The information and awareness campaign were followed by the establishment of nurseries in the three villages. The villagers were supervised by technicians from CASE Togo in the production of plants and trees.

About 11,200 seedlings were produced, including mahogany (*Khaya senegalensis*), *Terminalia superba*, *Samanea saman* and *Albizia lebbek*.



Followed the planting of seedlings on the banks of the river. On 26th June 2021 took place the planting of the last trees in the village of Missahome.



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"The people from the villages are proud that they could contribute to the reforestation of the riparian forests themselves. And they now know what they have to consider when growing and planting the trees and how important the riparian forests are."

Pablo Victor Yaovi AGBOGAN, Secretary General of Naturefriends Togo

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MONITORING AND EVALUATION

African mahogany (*Khaya senegalensis*), Limba (*Terminalia superba*) and rain tree (*Samanea saman*) - these are just some of the many tree species that have been planted by the residents of the three Togolese villages of Makumavo, Missahome and Mesiobe on the banks of the Zio River.

A total of about 11,200 seedlings were raised in three newly established tree nurseries, which were used to reforest ten hectares of the banks of the Zio River.

The planting was followed by maintenance measures and the creation of firebreaks to combat bush fires.

All those involved were pleased to have been able to contribute to the renaturation of the river, but at the same time are aware that this activity must continue in order to restore the gallery forest along this vital river on a large scale.



SUSTAINABILITY

As part the information campaign, the population was informed about the importance of the riverside forests and motivated to participate in the project.

The actual seedling planting with the participation of the locals also ensured the success of the plantings and the subsequent maintenance measures. In addition, the establishment of tree nurseries ensured that the tree plantings will continue after the official end of the project.

Last but not least, the trees will sequester carbon and promote biodiversity along the banks of the Zio River, thus also counteracting climate change.

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„Naturefriends Togo are also happy with the successful implementation of the project, but they also know that a lot of work remains to be done. "We have demonstrated on a small scale how the reforestation of the riparian forests of the Zio River can work in collaboration with the people who live there.

The next challenge will be to expand this activity and restore the riparian forests along the entire course of the river. Our big thanks go to the Naturefriends Europe for making this important pilot project possible with their donations to the Climate Fund."

Pablo Victor Yaovi AGBOGAN, Secretary General of Naturefriends Togo

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