

Editorial:

The Sacred Wood of Niengué-Coura¹

Saturday 23 January 2016, Aidemet NGO Program Officer, Dr Sergio Giani, visited Niengué-Coura, a village 60 km from Bamako in the Commune of Sanankoroba (Mali). He was accompanied by two citizens of the village: the journalist Bakary Camara and his brother Macki. The purpose of the visit was to discuss with the village chief and his counsellors on the best ways to protect, preserve and enhance



Photo n° 1 : The Sacred Wood

the "sacred wood" of the village: a perimeter of about 4 hectares, located just outside the village, which is part of the ancestral heritage of the community, being theatre of choice for various traditional ceremonies of animist societies. The sacred wood is, at the same time, place of conservation of magical collective memory, and place of safeguard of biodiversity, and of fight against climate

deregulation.

The visit allowed noting the presence of centenarian trees, true green patriarchs, of many medicinal plants, insects, reptiles, and other wildlife. The villagers are convinced of the interest and of the need to take collective actions to protect this sacred wood, especially face to the pressure on land speculation and bush fires. For this, they were mobilized for getting from the City Council a Customary Property Title Certification for the sacred wood. It is to underline also the importance for villagers to have on hand medicinal plants for the treatment of common diseases.



Photo n° 2 : The Green Patriarch

The discussions watched especially how to protect the area concerned, preferably with living farmyards. Access to the sacred wood being forbidden for women, discussion also focused on the



Photo n° 3 : The Village Council

possibility of entrusting to interested women a space "not sacred", bordering the sacred wood, to dedicate to the domestication and cultivation of medicinal species. The next step will be to perform a detailed and comprehensive inventory of the existing medicinal plants, carried

out by a Botanist, accompanied by the traditional healer of the village. The idea is to complete the knowledge of the current situation and achieve the participatory development of a mini-project of communitarian safeguard and valorisation of the sacred wood. In conclusion of the visit, Dr. Sergio Giani said: "Our NGO is not a lender of funds, but a donor of ideas and work. That's why we are committed to working with you in finalizing the project and in participatory research of technical and financial partners to support us in its implementation". **Bamako, January 2016.**

Bakary Camara, journalist, citizen of Niengué-Coura

Dr Sergio Giani, Program Officer of Aidemet NGO

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We inform our readers and friends that the fundraising to support the Project of Safeguard and Valorisation of the Sacred Wood of Niengué-Coura is open. If you want to help, contact us, please, at: aidemet@afribonemali.net. We'll explain how. Remember, no donation is too small if it is done with the heart!

We are also available to the NGO, and to the Technical and Financial Partners, interested in further information and any exchange in the perspective of a dynamic partnership.

¹ This article is an abstract from: Camara, B., *Municipality of Sanankoroba: Aidemet NGO aids the "sacred wood" of Niengué-Coura*, in The Phoenix, Bamako, February 3th, 2016