

## **Project Update: December 2017**

### **Introduction**

Mushrooms play an important role for the local population of tropical Africa as a source of food, of drugs and of incomes (Kamou *et al.*, 2015; Koné *et al.*, 2013; Yorou *et al.*, 2014). But in the region of Bassila in central Benin, the destruction of vegetation, selective cutting of partner trees and frequent bushfires cause the disappearance of certain species and the decrease in biomass of mushrooms. Literature revealed that more people know the threats and the utility of different species and the more effective are conservation actions. It is in this context that through this project we started to document people's knowledge about the usefulness of fungi for humans and forest ecosystems. This first phase then allowed us to know the information to integrate to better educate people about fungi and the need to protect them. The current report gives some details about awareness actions and comes at the continuation of part report previously sent.

### **Methodology**

Before the awareness sessions, we had produced *Afzelia africana* plants with the help of the population. Five surrounding villages in the Bassila Forest Reserve were selected with the help of forest officers and village chiefs. In each target village, a group of 10 volunteers were chosen to create and maintain the nursery of *Afzelia africana* plants. Once the 4000 plants were produced by reason of 800 plants per village, the degraded areas of the Bassila Forest Reserve previously identified with the help of forestry agents, local populations were reforested.

Once this step was over, awareness sessions with varying numbers of people following the village were made. Sensitised villages were those in which ethno-mycological studies were conducted and plants of *Afzelia africana* were produced. These were the villages of Akpassa, Adjiro, centre Bassila, Barikini and Frignon. In all 191 persons have been sensitized - 52 in the village Akpassa, 39 in the village Adjiro, 34 in the village centre Bassila, 17 in the village Barikini and 49 in the village Frignon. Additionally, pamphlets were shared with the forest inspectorate, the village chiefs, the youth and the people who participated in the sensitisation. This pamphlet explained the usefulness of fungi for populations and forest ecosystems and highlighted endangered fungi and partner trees of ectomycorrhizal fungi to be protected for the safeguarding of this fungus group in forest ecosystems.

### **Results**

The following images highlight the most important awareness actions.



Left: Team member showing threatened mushrooms and the causes of threat of mushrooms. Right: Local population sensitized with the presentation posters.



Left: Local population sensitized with the presentation posters. Right: Team member showing threatened mushrooms and the causes of threat of mushrooms.



Left: Seedling of *Afzelia Africana* produced for reforestation.



Team leader with his team doing lay-outs for reforestation



Members of the team doing planting

**Acknowledgement:**

I thank the communities of Akpassa, Adjiro, centre Bassila, Barikini and Frignon for welcoming the awareness actions. I thank Tchan Kassim, Aignon Hyppolite, Boni Soumeymane and the section of the waters and forests of Bassila and more precisely Laourou Agbodja Fataï who helps. We are very grateful to Rufford Small Grant that funded the project N°21569-1. We thank also the Laboratory of Ecology, Botany and Plant Biology for advice.