



Climate Situation: MONOCULTURE OF CAJÚ CAUSES INVALUABLE DAMAGE IN THE FOREST RESERVE

The monoculture of cajú has sprayed the entire forest conservation system in Guinea-Bissau, with the invasion of forests by the populations, for allegedly being ancestral properties of family members, an attitude that has been the cause of community conflicts.

This reality has also motivated the introduction of a new model of production and new product throughout the country, which comes invaluable damage to the forest reserve.

"Families violate other people's agricultural perimeters and the dispute over the ownership of arable fields between rural communities continues to create an escalation of tensions and conflicts," says one community activist.

For social activists, the fragility of the Guinean judicial system has not helped, in a way, in the resolution of conflicts over the possession of agricultural land.

"In the courts there are lots of cases related to social and community conflicts, but that are still shelved" indicated the president of the Association of Descendants and Friends of the Wire Community, Alberto Nango, to then stress that local government structures reveal weaknesses derived from some complicity in illicit land business, "this has instigated many conflicts in our rural areas", lamented the report in the Democratic Newspaper.

The marked loss of land associated with the irregularity of the rains also affects the food security of families in the communities of Djobel, Elia, Arame, Bulol, Essor and Elalab. Hunger is another factor that continues to enliven conflicts in these bands of Suzana's section.

EXPERTS CLAIM THAT SEVENTY PERCENT OF GUINEAN POPULATION LIVES IN RURAL AREAS

Guinea-Bissau is a country with approximately 2 million inhabitants and more than half, about 70%, living in rural areas.

Situated on the West Coast of Africa, bordered to the north by the Republic of Senegal, to the east and south by the Republic of Guinea-Conakry and to the west by the Atlantic Ocean, Guinea-Bissau has an area of 36. 125 km², of which 27. 700 km² constitute the eersa surface. About 4,000 km² are flooded seasonally or permanently by the waters of the rains or rivers that cut through the land of Guinea.

Guinea-Bissau is formed by a continental part and another island that covers the Bijagós archipelago, consisting of 88 islands, islets and islets, situated off the north Atlantic coast.

With the great availability of surface waters, the topography favors the existence of two areas of high agricultural potential, the regions influenced by the tides and the tracks surrounding the large basins of the Geba and Corubal Rivers.

It has about 26% of the territory, considered protected areas, 8 natural parks, 3 marine areas, between ecological corridors of fauna and 4 sites classified of international importance (Ramsar Convention).

IBAP REVEALS DEVASTATION OF MORE THAN 15 HECTARES OF FOREST IN THE PARK OF CUFADA

The Institute of Biodiversity and Protected Areas (IBAP), created by the government in 2005, is an institution specialized in the theme of biodiversity conservation and management.

Unlike many countries, in Guinea-Bissau the management of protected areas has been participatory, with locals playing an important role in the conservation process.

Statistical data indicate that, currently, the great challenge is to maintain the level of conservation that the country has managed to achieve with civic engagement and community actions developed by various individual actors, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and structures concerning the government.

The remarkable vulnerability of rural communities, which for their survival depend entirely on biodiversity resources, caused, a few years ago, to have begun to register drastic losses of biodiversity. A climatic factor, but associated with anthropic pressures, the uncontrolled deforesting of community forests to the detriment of itinerant farming practices and the introduction of cane monoculture.

It was then that incessant cycles of inter-community and family conflicts over the possession of productive land were debuted in a country that, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), is one of the largest consumers of rice on the West Coast of Africa.

With the scarcity of fields for the cultivation of this cereal due to the "exponential rise" of sea level that floods large areas of production, in this case the bolanhas (floodplains), recurring complaints began to emerge to report on incursions against protected areas.

The Director General of the Institute of Biodiversity and Protected Areas, Justino Biai, recently revealed that more than 15 hectares of forests have been devastated inside the Lagoa de Cufada National Park in the southern province of the country. He classified this type of behaviour as "dangerous" because it calls into question the sustainability of all biodiversity.

The agro-economist warns of the consequence of the introduction of the monoculture of the cajú that has recently been verified almost in all regions, because of the degradation and impoverishment of agricultural land in coastal areas.

LOGGING AND COMMERCIAL HUNTING ARE A SOURCE OF CONFLICTS BETWEEN INHABITANTS AND PARK GUARDS

Wood-hunting practices, commercial hunting, fires within protected areas have been the subject of conflicts between rural inhabitants and park guards.

Qualified by a group of experts as the country of recent sedimentation, Guinea-Bissau was also considered by the Climate Change and Environmental Risk Atlas as one of the countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change worldwide. In fact, in recent years, the negative impacts of climate change are apparent and experienced in rural communities.

The rise in sea levels on the north coast of the country has become more of an aggravating factor and the daily challenge for human subsistence is complicated. The situation has also caused the rural exodus that continues to grow.

In a video documentary re-published by DIVERGENTE, in 2019, Zé, an indigenous resident victim of climate impacts, reported how a man fought a phenomenon that occurred in the mouths of the North bank of the Cacheu River (<https://divergente.pt/o-ze-quer-saber-porque/>).

A study carried out on the country warns that if the geographical situation of the country is considered: coastal and recent sedimentation, Guinea-Bissau will hardly be able to save itself from situations of sea level rise. Its vulnerability should draw attention to public policies in the perspective of being able to respond in the short term, but also in the long term, addressing this natural phenomenon. For, global warming is causing sea level to rise in an "amazing way" in the coastal areas of the village of Varela and on the coastal strip of Djobel, Bulol, Elalab and Eссор (North).

This rapid advance of sea waters accelerates coastal erosion in the Suzana Section and the same phenomenon is observed on some islands of the Bijagós archipelago (South).

To address this and other related situations, the former National Coordinator of the Network of Schools of Environmental Verification, Issa Indjai, calls for the mobilization of efforts, involving concerning structures (Ministries of Territorial Administration and environment and biodiversity), to give an adjusted and consistent response and thus mitigate the effects of the climate phenomenon on the affected agricultural regions.

"CLIMATE EVENTS THREATEN THE SURVIVAL OF THE RURAL POPULATION AND ITS HABITAT" - ISSA INDJAI



The former National Coordinator of the Network of Environmental Verification Schools warned, in this particular, that climate events threaten not only the survival of rural populations, but also their own habitat and the national economy.

"Climate events threaten not only the survival of rural populations, but also their habitat, biodiversity and the national economy itself," writes the environmental activist.

The conflict over the possession of "bolanhas" (rice growing areas) has become widespread in all rural communities in Guinea-Bissau, although the country has the legal instrument for managing territory. The land law, formalized since 2019, determines that the State is the sole holder of the land, but in recent decades, the possession of land and bolanhas has been the main reason for conflicts between producers and sometimes between them and herders who, due to the threat of drought, especially in eastern Guinea-Bissau, large amounts of cattle are displaced in search of pastures in the north of the country.

"About 20 years ago there were no problems related to land tenure. In that era, the community inhabitants amicably ceded the spaces (land) for rice cultivation or for the purpose of building houses or farms. But today, the reality is quite different for reasons related to the lack of agricultural land and this situation is partly caused by climate change," he said.

CACHEU FACES WAVE OF OPEN CONFLICTS IN SUZANA CORRIDORS

In the Cacheu region, specifically in the communities of Djobel, Elia, Arame, Kassu, Bunhac and Culadje, there have been open conflicts and continues to occur between neighbouring communities that even cause loss of human life.

They are communities of peoples who traditionally live from the rhizoculture (rice crop), but particularly from the rice of freshwater bolanhas. The baiote or felupe people have a traditional technique of building waist dikes, other than that, it is a people with very deep knowledge of self-regulation of water from the bolanhas.

It is a technique inherited from their ancestors, which allows them to practice rhizoculture in the middle of tarrafes (mangrove).

In recent years, with sea level rising, the bolanhas where they produced rice in large amounts were flooded, making it impossible to produce cereal in low areas.

According to the research, the felupe people, formerly did not consume rice from store or imported, because it had its own production, which served for local consumption. With the climatic phenomenon, the productive areas significantly reduced and, at the same time, the practice of rhizoculture was affected.

The felupes are conservative, a people very connected to nature and that values and preserves the forest, because the forest represents an important symbolism in its boin. All its ceremonies and rituals are directly linked to the sacred forests. For example, in rural communities in the Cacheu region where the inhabitants are mostly of the felupe ethnic group, the palm tree plant has a very important economic and social value. The felupe people take advantage of all its components: wine for traditional and religious ceremonies, house building materials, food oil, so "it is a valued and preserved plant," he noted.

Today, in these times, climate impacts change everything in the lives of the people of this rural region, causing an escape to forest areas. Previously protected forests are now being cleared for fields of cultivation, as "bolanhas" are not useful for growing rice.

POPULATION OF DJOBEL SHELTERS IN PALHOTAS OF FELUPE ARCHITECTURE

The marked loss of land associated with the irregularity of the rains also affects the food security of families in the communities of Djobel, Elia, Arame, Bulol, Essor and Elalab. Hunger is another additional factor that continues to enliven the conflicts in these bands of suzana's section.

Djobel is a small town inhabited by about 700 people whose majority is women and children due to the rural exodus. The population is housed in palhotas of typical traditional felupe architecture.

In the last 10 years, the inhabitants of this small village have faced the rise in sea levels that have caused flooding and the popular are forced to abandon their homes.

There were several conversation initiatives led by representatives of neighboring communities, involving Civil Society organizations working in the field of conflict resolution and state authorities, aimed at negotiating to convince traditional occupants to give up a new space for the reception and resettlement of the inhabitants of the Djobel community who are victims of the floods.

The process has not been easy. More than six years, so far the situation prevails without solution. The level of mistrust grows among communities that form alliances in disputes over land tenure, now transformed into a real conflict.

Data collected on the ground indicate that, following the recurring conflicts over land tenure, since 2015, five (5) people have been killed in violent clashes between the communities of Arame and Elia and the latter, by the way, has established an alliance with the community of Djobel, while Arame has the support of the kassu community as its ally.

The violent clashes emerged as residents of the Djobel community joined their Elia allies in carrying out joint cleanup in the space delimited by the authorities that would serve as a new village for Djobel residents. This activity ended in attacks, because the communities did not understand the territorial boundary established by the authorities.

On May 5, 2020, Janpier Manga, 47, a member of elia's community, was wounded with two automatic weapon (AK 47) shots and luckily escaped death. After recovering from his injuries at the sector hospital in São Domingos, the victim directly accused, on the local broadcaster, Kasumai Community Radio, the head of the community of Bussali (a neighboring village allied with Arame) of complicity and author of the two shots against his physical integrity.

Situations such as this are more frequent in times of cultivation and harvest. For example, in December 2020, in Nhoma, a town about 25 kilometres from the capital Bissau, four (4) people were killed following clashes over the possession of "bolanhas" (floodplains). The peasants of the neighboring communities of Sumo and Yugum engaged in violent clashes, motivating police intervention and subsequent detention of many peasants by security forces.

Quintino, the younger brother of one of the fatalities, lamented the fact that people were killed in bloody beatings because of bolanhas or agricultural fields, because "the villages of Sumo and Yugum besides being neighboring villages share blood ties."

"These are just related notes that can't jump in sight, but in Djobel the situation is the worst there is," he said.

"It's sad to abandon our customs and rituals, but in fact life is already impossible here," laments in an apprehensive tone, an elder of the flooded community.

In this coastal range, rice production was reduced almost to zero because of insufficient rainfall, associated with the loss of agricultural land, due to the rise in sea level that salinized the bolanhas.

But, amazingly, in the midst of all this, in the flooded community (Djobel), few know how to explain the phenomenon, because the impacts of climate change are related to myth. The elders of the community claim that there is a large snake in the ocean that forces the rise of seawater, invading the shores and flooding its pockets. For others it is divine punishment against the Baiote or Felupe people.

These are details that prove that, despite being victims of the impacts of climate change, civilizational belief or myth leads the whole community to have a paradoxical understanding of what climate reality is.

From the North Coast, in Sucudjac to Cabo-Roxo (border limit with Casamansa), to the south coast in the Bijagos archipelago, coastal erosion follows a devastating pace causing the drastic loss of land influencing the food security of rural inhabitants who are already in extreme poverty situations.

Guinea-Bissau has signed and ratified the main agreements under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In 1995 it ratified the UNFCCC; in 2005 it ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2011 and in 2016 signed the Paris Agreement.

Since 2006, the country has had a national plan for adaptation to climate change (NAPA), in the short term, in which it has cast the agriculture and water management sector as priority sectors to fight climate change. However, the cyclical political instability experienced in the country has not allowed the effective implementation of resilient strategies to the impacts of climate change in Guinea-Bissau.

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<https://www.odemocratagb.com/?p=33643&cat=6&fbclid=IwAR2g1wWHRPbfE27TaXAA2dTFqEPWF7H-prClpC8kTZn2Jcz8cICRFJYwIw>