

Saving Our Rain Forests

TRAILER

Gabon is a sparsely populated country covered mostly in rainforest – just 1½ million people live here. That, and the fact that oil wealth has made per capita income higher in Gabon than most other African countries, are some of the reasons why its natural wonders are so well preserved. But the oil is running out and the government has started selling other mineral resources to foreign investors, which means destroying large tracts of forest. One conservationist is determined to slow the destruction – and his efforts have won him the Goldman Prize, known as the “Green Nobel”.

RUNTIME: 08:08

COUNTRY: GABON

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SCRIPT

COMMENTARY

The Ivindo River is the lifeline of northeastern Gabon.

From its source near the border with Congo, it cuts through dense forest on its way to the ocean and drops into a series of dramatic waterfalls known as Kongou.

A protected area was set up here in 2002 by President Omar Bongo to protect the falls. It's called the Ivindo National Park.

Visits to the falls by outsiders are still rare: these tourists took almost 2 days to get here - from the capital...

But the falls are a central part of the life and beliefs of communities in the area. Innocent Mbdouma, who grew up just outside the park, agreed to show us around...

ITV, INNOCENT MBADOUMA, Local Environmentalist (French/ Subtitled)

“Here women sometimes use this to charm men. If the woman wants a man to herself, she takes a bit of this, mixes it with peanut-butter or cucumber and swallows it whole. That’s it. After that, you can’t move, you can’t do anything to stop it. That’s the power of love.”

COMMENTARY

But less than 200 km upriver of the falls lies one of the biggest untapped iron ore deposits in the world.

Three years ago, the President backed a Chinese plan for a 3.5 billion mining development in Belinga, which includes flooding the Kongou falls to create a hydro-electric dam to power the mine. As it’s upstream it would also pollute all of the rivers downstream.

In 2007, the Chinese started work on putting the infrastructure in place.

ITV, INNOCENT MBADOUMA, Local Environmentalist (French/ Subtitled)

“Here behind us, unfortunately, is the development that will also lead to devastation. Those are the tracks of the Chinese who want to put in a dam here. As you can see, it is destroying the beauty of the forest.”

COMMENTARY

Gabon is part of the Congo Basin– the second largest rainforest in the world which absorbs huge amounts of Carbon Dioxide from the atmosphere and is home to countless plants and animals.

That’s why this man wasn’t going to let the planned Belinga mine destroy such a big part of it.

By standing up to his government and the Chinese investors, Gabonese conservationist Marc Ona Essangui got the forest area given to the Mine project reduced by over 90%.

As a result, he was one of seven people from all over the world chosen to receive this year's Goldman Environmental Prize. The winners get \$ 150,000 each – money that Ona can put to good use to continue his activism.

But perhaps more important is the exposure he's getting here, with world famous activists like Al Gore and Tracy Chapman attending.

ITV, TRACY CHAPMAN (English)

“The environment supports all of us and we need to protect it. And it shows how global things are, that they're choosing people from all over the world who are doing amazing work and I think it's just important that we pay attention and protect this place that's important to us all.”

COMMENTARY

Marc's fight started here – in Gabon's capital Libreville, where he runs the environmental NGO, Brainforest.

In 2007 the NGO got hold of correspondence about the mine: it gave the Chinese a huge tax break and Gabon only 10% of the profits.

When Ona and his team leaked the deal, it made front page news for months – the public outcry was so strong that the government was forced to reconsider.

ITV, MARC ONA ESSANGUI, Goldman Environmental Prize Winner 2009 (French)

“Africa can no longer sign contracts to exploit their natural resources with economic partners like back in the 1930s – where outside partners just ordered Africans what to do. No! Africa has many very competent high level lawyers – African countries have

to put faith in their experts. I would say that Africa doesn't have to be subservient to do business with economic partners."

COMMENTARY

Ona has moved around the city in a wheelchair since he had polio as a child. His movements are also restricted by his activism: he wasn't allowed to leave the country for all of 2008 and was jailed for 9 days in December. But he refuses to let any of it cramp his style.

ITV, MARC ONA ESSANGUI (French)

"I feel free, I move around freely because I don't feel bad about anything. I do my work. Other people can say what they like and they can decide for themselves what I should be ashamed of. But I believe that I'm doing what I should be doing in the kind of organisation that I manage."

COMMENTARY

At Libreville's Mbolo shopping centre, Ona picks up supplies for his family – and then some sustenance for himself: political magazines.

ITV, MARC ONA ESSANGUI (French)

"Everyone does their work. Mandela spent time in Jail, but when he came out, he never stopped the fight. I'm not Mandela but I say if you haven't found a cause for which you are ready to die, you haven't found your meaning in life."

COMMENTARY

Conservationists rarely become celebrities but here in Gabon, Ona is a widely recognized – and deeply respected – figure.

ITV, GASPARD OBIANG, Pastor (French)

"We appreciate his dedication and his work and especially the ideas that he defends in our country – he's really a remarkable person."

COMMENTARY

But at home, Ona is just ‘Dad’ – an ordinary husband and father with a daily routine that centres around his family.

5-year old Giovanna is practicing her dictations and 3-year old twins Chouchou and La Fille are trying to keep up with her...

ITV, MARC ONA ESSANGUI (French)

“The Gabon of tomorrow will be what we give to our children. The biodiversity here is intense. I think Gabon has the highest concentration of biodiversity in the world. Our children have to discover this natural beauty so that when it’s their turn, they are able to preserve the environment.”

COMMENTARY

The Africa that our children are growing up in today is still a continent of natural wonders – one of which is the huge forest that covers central Africa.

But governments here have little incentive to protect it if the minerals under the ground are more valuable than the forest itself. Policy-makers all over the world need to act together, so that it makes economic sense to protect trees, rather than simply sell the land they’re on to the highest bidder.

SHOT LIST

01:00 SHOT OF THE IVINDO RIVER IN GABON

01:03 COMMENTARY, VARIOUS SHOTS OF THE IVINDO RIVER IN GABON, SHOT OF KONGOU WATERFALLS (ENGLISH)

“The Ivindo River is the lifeline of northeastern Gabon.

From its source near the border with Congo, it cuts through dense forest on its way to the ocean and drops into a series of dramatic waterfalls known as Kongou.”

01:17 VARIOUS SHOTS OF KONGOU FALLS

01:33 COMMENTARY, VARIOUS SHOTS OF KONGOU FALLS, SHOT OF MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE IVINDO RIVER AND IVINDO NATIONAL PARK (ENGLISH)

“A protected area was set up here in 2002 by President Omar Bongo to protect the falls. It’s called the Ivindo National Park.”

01:43 SHOT OF VISITORS CANOEING DOWN THE IVINDO RIVER

01:45 COMMENTARY, VARIOUS SHOTS OF VISITORS CANOEING DOWN THE IVINDO RIVER (ENGLISH)

“Visits to the falls by outsiders are still rare: these tourists took almost 2 days to get here - from the capital...”

01:52 SHOT OF VISITORS CANOEING DOWN THE IVINDO RIVER

01:55 SHOT OF LOCAL GUIDES HELPING TO MOOR THE CANOES ON THE RIVER BANK

01:56 COMMENTARY, VARIOUS SHOT OF LOCAL GUIDES HELPING TO MOOR THE CANOES ON THE RIVER BANK, SHOT OF LOCAL ENVIRONMENTALIST INNOCENT MBDOUMA WALKING THROUGH THE FOREST, SHOT OF LOCAL GUIDES (ENGLISH)

«But the falls are a central part of the life and beliefs of communities in the area. Innocent Mbdouma, who grew up just outside the park, agreed to show us around...”

02:06 SHOT OF LOCAL GUIDES

02:08 ITV, INNOCENT MBADOUMA, LOCAL ENVIRONMENTALIST
(ENGLISH/SUBTITLED)

“Here women sometimes use this to charm men. If the woman wants a man to herself, she takes a bit of this, mixes it with peanut-butter or cucumber and swallows it whole. That’s it. After that, you can’t move, you can’t do anything to stop it. That’s the power of love.”

02:51 AERIAL VIEWS OF THE IVINDO RIVER

02:52 COMMENTARY, VARIOUS AERIAL SHOTS OF RIVER IVINDO, MAP
SHOWING LOCATION OF BELINGA IN RELATION TO THE KONGOU FALLS
AND RIVERS DOWNSTREAM (ENGLISH)

“But less than 200 km upriver of the falls lies one of the biggest untapped iron ore deposits in the world.

Three years ago, the President backed a Chinese plan for a 3.5 billion mining development in Belinga, which includes flooding the Kongou falls to create a hydroelectric dam to power the mine. As it’s upstream it would also pollute all of the rivers downstream.”

03:20 SHOT OF FOREST SHOWING AREAS CLEARED FOR DEVELOPMENT

03:21 COMMENTARY, SHOT OF FOREST SHOWING AREAS CLEARED FOR
DEVELOPMENT, SHOT OF THE RIVER IVINDO (ENGLISH)

“In 2007, the Chinese started work on putting the infrastructure in place.”

03:26 ITV, INNOCENT MBADOUMA, LOCAL ENVIRONMENTALIST
(ENGLISH/SUBTITLED)

“Here behind us, unfortunately, is the development that will also lead to devastation. Those are the tracks of the Chinese who want to put in a dam here. As you can see, it is destroying the beauty of the forest.”

03:46 SHOT OF MBADOUMA AND GUIDE WALKING ACROSS AREA
CLEARED FOR DEVELOPMENT

03:50 COMMENTARY, MAP SHOWING THE CONGO BASIN, SHOT OF
GABONESE CONSERVATIONIST MARC ONA ESSANGUI RECEIVING HIS
2009 GOLDMAN ENVIRONMENTAL PRIZE, VARIOUS SHOTS OF ESSANGUI
MOVING AROUND THE STAGE ON A WHEELCHAIR, SHOT OF MARC ONA
ESSANGUI AND OTHER 2009 PRIZE WINNERS

“Gabon is part of the Congo Basin– the second largest rainforest in the world which
absorbs huge amounts of Carbon Dioxide from the atmosphere and is home to
countless plants and animals.

That’s why this man wasn’t going to let the planned Belinga mine destroy such a big
part of it.

By standing up to his government and the Chinese investors, Gabonese
conservationist Marc Ona Essangui got the forest area given to the Mine project
reduced by over 90%.

As a result, he was one of seven people from all over the world chosen to receive this
year’s Goldman Environmental Prize. The winners get \$ 150,000 each – money that
Ona can put to good use to continue his activism.”

04:34 SHOT OF ONA AND OTHER PRIZE WINNERS WAVING TO THE
CROWD

04:36 COMMENTARY, SHOT OF JOURNALISTS TAKING PICTURES, SHOT
OF MARC ONA AND THE OTHER PRIZE WINNERS POSING FOR A PHOTO
WITH AL GORE (ENGLISH)

“But perhaps more important is the exposure he’s getting here, with world famous
activists like Al Gore and Tracy Chapman attending.”

04:46 ITV, TRACY CHAPMAN, MUSICIAN AND ACTIVIST (ENGLISH)

“The environment supports all of us and we need to protect it. And it shows how global things are, that they’re choosing people from all over the world who are doing amazing work and I think it’s just important that we pay attention and protect this place that’s important to us all.”

05:07 PANORAMA SHOT OF LIBREVILLE

05:09 COMMENTARY, VARIOUS SHOTS OF GABON’S CAPITAL LIBREVILLE, EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE OFFICE OF THE NGO RUN BY MARC ONA, ‘BRAINFOREST’, VARIOUS SHOTS OF ONA AND HIS COLLEAGUES IN A MEETING, VARIOUS SHOTS OF A 2007 NEWSPAPER HEADLINES ABOUT THE MINING DEAL ON ONA’S LAPTOP, VARIOUS SHOTS OF ONA WORKING AT HIS LAPTOP (ENGLISH)

“Marc’s fight started here – in Gabon’s capital Libreville, where he runs the environmental NGO, Brainforest.

In 2007 the NGO got hold of correspondence about the mine: it gave the Chinese a huge tax break and Gabon only 10% of the profits.

When Ona and his team leaked the deal, it made front page news for months – the public outcry was so strong that the government was forced to reconsider.”

05:40 ITV, MARC ONA ESSANGUI, GOLDMAN ENVIRONMENTAL PRIZE WINNER 2009 (FRENCH)

“Africa can no longer sign contracts to exploit their natural resources with economic partners like back in the 1930s – where outside partners just ordered Africans what to do. No! Africa has many very competent high level lawyers – African countries have to put faith in their experts. I would say that Africa doesn’t have to be subservient to do business with economic partners.”

06:13 SHOT OF ONA TRAVELING ALONG THE CITY ON HIS WHEELCHAIR

06:15 COMMENTARY, VARIOUS SHOTS OF ONA TRAVELING ALONG THE CITY ON HIS WHEELCHAIR (ENGLISH)

“Ona has moved around the city in a wheelchair since he had polio as a child. His movements are also restricted by his activism: he wasn’t allowed to leave the country for all of 2008 and was jailed for 9 days in December. But he refuses to let any of it cramp his style.”

06:33 SHOT OF ONA MOVING TO HIS OFFICE

06:35 ITV, MARC ONA ESSANGUI (FRENCH)

“I feel free, I move around freely because I don’t feel bad about anything. I do my work. Other people can say what they like and they can decide for themselves what I should be ashamed of. But I believe that I’m doing what I should be doing in the kind of organisation that I manage.”

06:54 SHOT OF MBOLO SHOPPING CENTRE IN LIBREVILLE

06:57 COMMENTARY, VARIOUS SHOTS OF ONA SHOPPING FOR SUPPLIES AT THE CITY’S MBOLO SHOPPING CENTRE (ENGLISH)

“At Libreville’s Mbolo shopping centre, Ona picks up supplies for his family – and then some sustenance for himself: political magazines.”

07:07 SHOT OF POLITICAL MAGAZINES ON A SHELF

07:10 ITV, MARC ONA ESSANGUI (FRENCH)

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07:27 SHOT OF OTHER SHOPPERS AT THE MBOLO SHOPPING CENTRE

07:28 COMMENTARY, SHOT OF SHOPPERS, SHOT OF OTHER SHOPPERS GREETING ONA (ENGLISH)

“Conservationists rarely become celebrities but here in Gabon, Ona is a widely recognized – and deeply respected – figure.”

07:37 ITV, GASPARD OBIANG, PASTOR (FRENCH)

“We appreciate his dedication and his work and especially the ideas that he defends in our country – he’s really a remarkable person.”

07:48 SHOT OF ONA WITH HIS WIFE AND THREE DAUGHTERS

07:49 COMMENTARY, VARIOUS SHOTS OF ONA WITH HIS FAMILY, VARIOUS SHOTS OF ONA’S FIVE-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER GIOVANNA WRITING, SHOT OF ONA’S OTHER TWO DAUGHTERS WRITING ON A BLACKBOARD (ENGLISH)

“But at home, Ona is just ‘Dad’ – an ordinary husband and father with a daily routine that centres around his family.

5-year old Giovanna is practicing her dictations and 3-year old twins Chouchou and La Fille are trying to keep up with her...”

08:05 VARIOUS SHOTS OF ONA’S TWO DAUGHTERS WRITING ON A BLACKBOARD

08:09 WIDE SHOT OF ON AND HIS FAMILY

08:11 ITV, MARC ONA ESSANGUI (FRENCH)

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08:31 AERIAL SHOT OF THE CONGO FOREST

08:33 COMMENTARY, VARIOUS AERIAL SHOTS OF THE CONGO FOREST
AND THE IVINDO RIVER (ENGLISH)

“The Africa that our children are growing up in today is still a continent of natural wonders – one of which is the huge forest that covers central Africa.

But governments here have little incentive to protect it if the minerals under the ground are more valuable than the forest itself. Policy-makers all over the world need to act together, so that it makes economic sense to protect trees, rather than simply sell the land they’re on to the highest bidder.”

09:02 AERIAL SHOT OF THE CONGO FOREST AND THE IVINDO RIVER

END

Source: Africa Journal