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 Danzer sells its logging operations in the DRC — will its successor do any better?



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Blogpost by **Mike Baillie and Monica Davies** - March 22, 2012 at 9:59

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After months of rumours, it's official: Danzer has sold its industrial logging operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Effective February 23rd, its subsidiary Siforco (which holds logging rights to around 2,1 million hectares of forest) was ceded to American-owned Groupe Blattner Elwyn (GBE).

This ends 40 years of Danzer's involvement in the DRC, a time that was all too often characterised by social conflicts and destruction of tropical rainforest.

The key questions are what the Siforco takeover will mean for the communities that were victim of Danzer-sponsored violence and what the new owner will bring in terms of "sustainable forestry" and "development".

Danzer's press release [stated](#) : "Besides the industrial development, we have also reached an internationally recognized professional level in sustainable forest management and social activities" - totally disregarding [the reality on the ground](#) .

(Story continues below)



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Conflict Timber Action in Caen Port

Greenpeace uncovers a shipment of tropical timber from the Democratic Republic of Congo belonging to the German logging company "Danzer" in the French port of Caen and marked the area as a "Forest Crime Scene" with messages painted in red. Greenpeace activists expose Danzer involvement in acts of violence on a forest community in the province of Bumba. 11/07/2011 © Nicolas Chauveau / Greenpeace

A history of violence

Danzer has caused uproar in local communities by repeatedly violating its social obligations such as providing schools and health centers. In 2011, village protests against Danzer led to violent repression, rape, and beatings that then resulted in the death of one person - involving the use of Siforco vehicles and payments of the perpetrators by a Siforco manager. The victims [filed a historic legal complaint](#) against Danzer's worksite manager and police and military.

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Now that Danzer is leaving the DRC, will it still be held accountable for its deeds? Will communities be compensated for the severe human rights abuses in which it was involved?

Greenpeace urges Danzer to act responsibly, respect the right of communities to take legal action, and promote a fair and transparent legal process.

Sustainable Forest Management remains an illusion

Danzer's departure from the DRC, and the chaos it's leaving in its wake again exposes the myth that industrial logging brings sustainable development.

In the rainforests of the Congo Basin, industrial loggers cut out the most commercially valuable trees, pack up their chainsaws, and go on to find new, pristine forest. What's left behind for local communities is a depleted forest resource, disrupted social structures, and lost jobs.

The logging frontier moves deeper and deeper into the remaining intact rainforest areas of the Congo Basin, exposing vast new areas to destruction.

Gross deforestation rates have doubled in the Congo Basin since 1990 and [logging is a key driver](#). DRC's 2002 moratorium on the allocation of new industrial logging permits in the DRC should be enforced and maintained.

Instead of promoting further logging, international donors should invest in real solutions, like community-based alternatives, independent monitoring and a participative land-use plan.

Will the new operator do any better?

Danzer's operations in the DRC will be taken over by Groupe Blattner Elwyn. Other members of the Blattner family are involved in the logging sector via Saffois in Orientale province. [In 2008 Greenpeace reported](#) on Saffois' illegal logging activities and social conflicts in Yafunga. GBE has been involved in infrastructure and agribusiness, [amongst other activities](#).

GBE has - as far as we know - not yet released information on their plans, but according to Danzer, they "intend to follow our industrial and forest management concept".

What this really means is unclear at this point. But the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has told Greenpeace that GBE will not pursue FSC certification of sustainable forest management or controlled wood. The existing certificates were immediately cancelled on GBE's request.

We have little hope that the forest and its people will be better off with GBE.

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