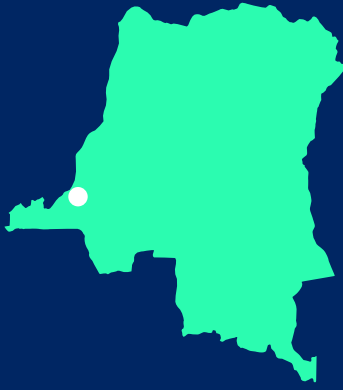


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Natural Climate Solutions in Action

Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project

Project/Program Type	Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) under the Reduced Emissions from Degradation and Deforestation (REDD+) mechanism. Project includes forestry, agriculture and wetlands actions.
Description	The Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project partners with the local community to protect 300,000 hectares of critical bonobo and forest elephant habitat within the world's second-largest intact rainforest. It does so by working to reduce the principal drivers of forest and biodiversity loss and strategic investments into the surrounding local communities. Such investments include building and renovating schools, providing healthcare services (such as access to immunizations), supporting food security and nutrition (such as through agricultural diversification), and providing capacity building activities.
Location	The project area is situated in the Inongo Territory in the Mai Ndombe Province. The Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project sits within the Congo Basin, the world's second-largest intact rainforest and contains some of the most important wetlands on the planet.
Scale	Currently 300,000 hectares - pilot ing for more projects in the DRC with a goal of addressing 3 million hectares of threatened forest.
Number of credits issued	13,322,276



Impacts

Impact To-Date

Since the project launch in 2011, logging concessions have not been re-granted and with reforestation programme, the deforested areas are regenerating. Agroforestry and fishing programs have relieved deforestation pressure and improved nutrition for the community. Ten schools have been built and there are 20+ more to come. A secondary health clinic for the central village and a mobile medical clinic were established that treated thousands who previously had little or no health care access. Because of logging activity and hunting, leopards, elephants, and buffalos had not been seen in the area since the 1970s. In 2020 these species finally returned to this part of the forest. The Bonobos population is also recovering.

Projected Longer-Term Impact

The project's long-term goal is for the local community to have and lead reliable financing for their forest economy to support the health of the people, forest and wildlife.

(1) Community: Increase access to and quality of education and health. Improve land-tenure status through participatory mapping. Promote sustainable agriculture, household livestock management and fishing. Increase access to markets, improving infrastructure, creating jobs.

(2) Climate: Reduce CO₂ emissions within the project area by stopping planned legal and illegal forest deforestation and degradation with sustainable financing for a regenerative forest economy.

(3) Biodiversity: Retain/restore ecosystem integrity through alternative livelihoods, education and outreach. Establish protocols to avoid human wildlife conflict as wildlife populations increase.



A REDD+ Project to Reach Some of the World's Most Marginalized Communities

Jean Robert Bwangoy was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo near the black-water lake called Mai Ndombe, where his grandfather had been Chief of a local tribe. His grandfather moved the family into town so they could pursue education; and Bwangoy would grow up to study agroforestry in Canada and the United States. Eventually, however, he returned to his ancestors' lands near Lake Mai Ndombe. "As Chiefs, my grandfather and great-grandfather did the best they could for their communities," Bwangoy says. "My goal is to fulfill what they wanted to do."

Today Bwangoy runs the Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project, whose 300,000 hectare of protected forest includes his grandfather's former tribal territory. The project area is part of the world's second largest rainforest (after the Amazon) and is home to threatened species like bonobos and forest elephants. Some 50,000 people also live in and around the Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project in some of the most marginalized communities in the world. Indigenous communities depend on the forest for fruit, fish, meat, honey and medicinal herb. As their populations have grown, the local villages have also sold trees to timber companies or practiced slash-and-burn agriculture to build cassava farms.

In the 1990s, Bwangoy worked for the DRC's forestry department on forest maps and deforestation analysis. "Honestly there was really no way of protecting the forest," he remembers. "You could see the slow extension of deforestation from the villages." He left the forestry department

to try to start an agroforestry project to protect the forest around Lake Mai Ndombe. "We were going from funding institution to funding institution trying to raise money," he says. "That's when we had the idea of a REDD+ project that will generate its own revenues."

Bwangoy partnered with Wildlife Works, a company that was already operating a REDD+ project in Kenya, to start the Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project in 2011. The Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project calculates the amount of emissions being avoided by protecting forest that would have otherwise been destroyed and sells carbon credits to companies like British Airways, Burberry and Nespresso, under the Independent International Standard VERRA which was created to implement a voluntary market for the United Nations' Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) mechanism.



Jean Robert Bwangoy
Head of DR Congo,
Wildlife Works

We were going from funding institution to funding institution trying to raise money.

That's when we had the idea of a REDD+ project that will generate its own revenues.



300,000
hectares of
protected
forest



28
villages
in the project
area receiving
payments



100
MtCO₂
predicted
emissions
reductions over
the 30-year life
of the project

10
schools
built in local
villages

Follow the
progress



The revenue from carbon credits is used to fund sustainable development that replaces extractive forms of livelihoods and finances the continued protection of forests by local communities.



Jean Robert Bwangoy
Head of DR Congo,
Wildlife Works

Nobody believed us first.

We were bringing a different model, one that tells people you don't need to cut trees or clear land.

It took two years to build trust with local communities and demonstrate that carbon credits would offer larger and longer-term investments than logging and slash-and-burn agriculture. "Nobody believed us first," Bwangoy says. "We were bringing a different model, one that tells people you don't need to cut trees or clear land." People had noticed, however, that temperatures were getting warmer. Bwangoy and his partners explained how trees removed gases that caused the warming—and that companies that produced emissions would actually pay them to protect trees.

The Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project is projected to reduce approximately 100MtCO₂ emissions over the 30-year life of the project. Twenty-eight villages in the project area now receive payments with bonuses to those protecting the most forest. The project has been especially impactful in villages like Ikita, whose *Batwa* people have historically been targets of discrimination by neighboring communities. "The project has built the school, provided school uniforms to children, built a water well for potable water in the village and they are also teaching us honey production techniques," says Chief Basabo Boot'Ombala of Ikita. "The school is the most important because we've never had this in the past."

Since 2011, the Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project has built 10 schools in local villages. It has built a health clinic in the central village Lokonga and a mobile clinic to provide free health care to more remote communities. One of the project's main

initiatives has been to teach farmers agricultural intensification to replace unsustainable slash-and-burn practices. The Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project has been giving farmers strains of cassava with yields 10 times greater than what they traditionally grew, so they can produce more food without clearing forest. Additionally, it has partnered with communities to build sustainable fish farms to relieve the pressure from overfishing on the lake.

For people like Chief Basabo, the Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project is an opportunity to finance their livelihoods that protect the forest and their traditional ways of life. "We get our food from the forest, but these resources were becoming depleted," she says. "By protecting our forest through conservation, we can get them back."

The DRC government has not renewed any logging concessions in the Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project's area since its inception in 2011. As deforestation goes down, critically endangered animals like bonobos and forest elephants are recovering in the forest—creating new opportunities for communities. "Now they want tourism," Bwangoy says. "They say now we can get more benefits."



Chief Basabo
Booto of the
Indigenous Batwa
Pygmies in the
village of Ikita

We get our food from the forest, but these resources were becoming depleted.

By protecting our forest through conservation, we can get them back.

Bwangoy hopes to be able to expand forest north of the project area to protect the habitats of chimpanzees and okapis. Eventually, he imagines protecting 10 million hectares of Congo rainforest. REDD+ has created a mechanism to partner with forest communities for forest protection on a scale beyond anything that Bwangoy's grandfather and great-grandfather had imagined. "I'm just doing in my way what they were doing," Bwangoy says. "Since I was young, I always knew I would serve that community."



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About the NCS Alliance

The NCS Alliance (NCSA) conveys the voice of businesses, NGOs and solution providers on the need to mobilize a high integrity demand for high quality Natural Climate Solutions (NCS). The Alliance focuses on identifying opportunities and barriers to investment in the NCS voluntary carbon market and serves as a forum for knowledge sharing and technical capacity building to ensure natural climate solutions reach their full potential in abating climate change, while also tackling nature loss and socio-economic issues. NCS in Action was established to showcase how NCS are making a real difference in the world today.

For more information visit www.naturalclimatesolutionsalliance.org and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).



Statement of Acknowledgment

The NCS in Action are testimonials designed to highlight the benefits for people and nature associated with NCS projects and programs financed through the voluntary carbon market. The NCS Alliance strongly believes that the voluntary carbon market is necessary for financing NCS projects and programs. It is critical however that it rests on the integrity of the climate benefits, i.e. the ability of credits to truly represent real and verifiable carbon reductions.

The NCS Alliance recognizes the importance of staying up-to-date with the latest science and best practices as carbon-crediting programs evolve. We acknowledge that there have been challenges with certain methodologies and that improvements have not always been made as quickly as necessary. However, we believe that this is a valuable learning-by-doing process and that scaling up NCS is crucial in achieving global 1.5C goals. In support of this, the NCS Alliance will continue to highlight projects and programs in this space while also advocating for consistent improvement in standards and methodologies. For more information about how and when these methodologies are updated see [Verra](#), [Plan Vivo](#), [ACR](#), [ART](#).

NCS in Action is made possible with generous funding support from the We Mean Business Coalition.

Disclaimer

Inclusion of an NCS project or program in the NCS in Action program does not imply a recommendation to purchase, trade or retire credits associated with the project or program.

The NCS Alliance and its members take no responsibility for the purchase, trade or retirement of credits from these projects and programs. Instead, it recommends that individuals, companies and other organisations procuring credits as part of their climate strategies conduct their own independent due diligence to validate the quality and environmental integrity of their purchases.

The NCS Alliance secretariat in no way benefits financially or by other means from the selection.

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