



PROFILE

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Initiating forest climate demonstration activities

Forest & Climate Initiative

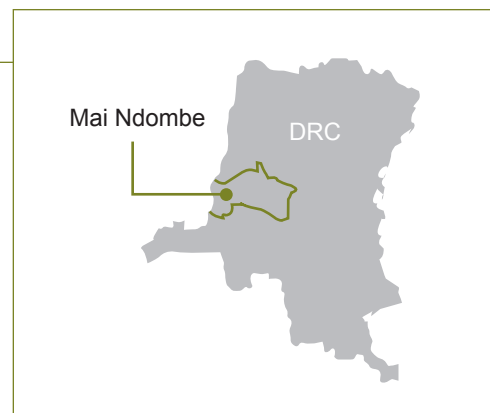
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Maintaining the Green Heart of Africa's forests for people and the planet

Mai Ndombe, Democratic Republic of the Congo

The rainforests of the Congo Basin are among the largest on Earth, second only to the Amazon. Yet, unlike the Amazon's rainforests, deforestation rates in the Congo Basin have been relatively low. Because of this, vast forests still stand in this region, often called the Green Heart of Africa.

Spanning more than 3 million hectares in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Mai Ndombe landscape encompasses diverse ecosystems, including tropical moist forests interspersed with savannas and peat-rich "swamp" forests. Human population densities in the region are low, and a large proportion of the residents practice traditional lifestyles based on hunting, fishing and collecting products from the forests. These forests are also home to the endangered bonobo (*Pan paniscus*), one of the four great ape species found wild nowhere else on Earth.

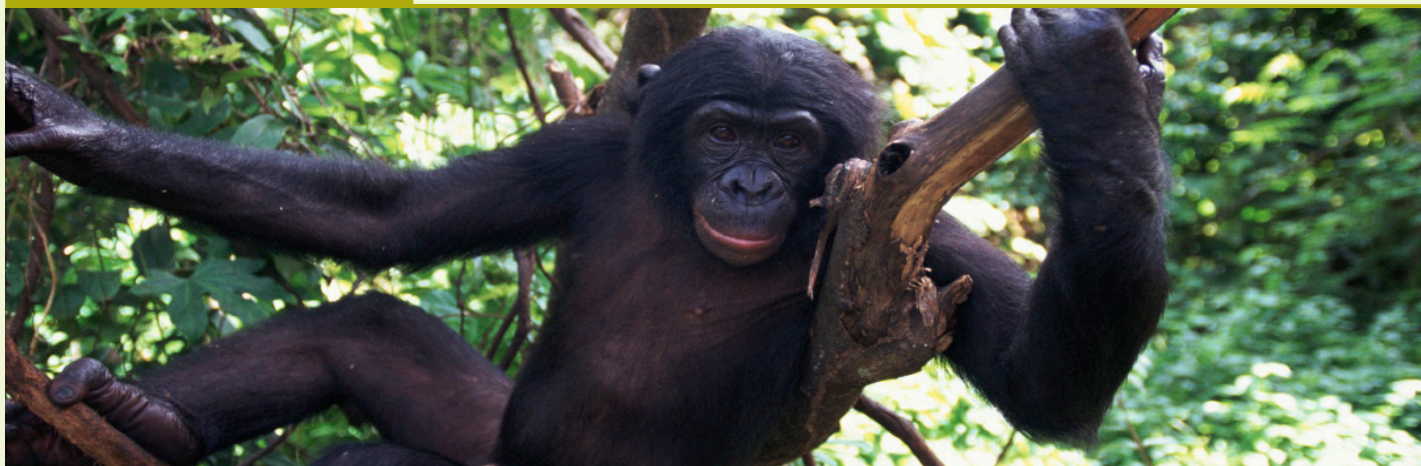


Forests under pressure

While the current rate of deforestation is low in DRC, it is relatively much higher in Mai Ndombe, where shifting agriculture, firewood collection and charcoal production for local and regional markets impact forests. Forest loss is projected to increase even more as a result of development schemes that involve drainage of wetlands for large-scale agriculture, upgrading basic transportation infrastructure and allocating rights for mineral and timber extraction. A balance must be struck between development in the region and maintaining the forests upon which people and wildlife depend.



THE VALUE OF TROPICAL FORESTS
EXTENDS WELL BEYOND THEIR CARBON
STORAGE CAPACITY TO INCLUDE IMPORTANT
ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND KEY ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS FOR
FOREST-DEPENDENT PEOPLE



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REDD+ - A promising solution?

If we can find a way to halt forest loss in the region, not only will a vital part of the Congo Basin's rainforests be conserved, but the carbon held in the plants and soil of these forests will remain sequestered – which is key to fighting climate change. Efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and to conserve, sustainably manage and enhance forest carbon stocks (referred to as REDD+) are underway in DRC. REDD+ is a scheme to compensate

developing countries for maintaining and sustainably managing their forests.

WWF is working in Mai Ndombe to build community engagement in REDD+. Our aim, in collaboration with communities and governments, is to put plans in place to protect large areas of forests in the region while at the same time supporting sustainable forest uses and community development.

Our work in Mai Ndombe

Projects at scale, like this one at the landscape level, are needed to address the challenge of ensuring real reductions in forest loss, so lasting reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation are achieved. But reducing emissions alone is not enough; REDD+ must go hand-in-hand with supporting the well-being of people and nature. WWF's work focuses on maintaining the health of forests and their capacity to sustain environmental services and the globally significant biodiversity they harbour.

The inclusion of forest-dependent communities is essential to any forest conservation effort. They stand to lose most from deforestation and are often best placed

to act as stewards and defenders of forests. Using participatory zoning as a tool, WWF is working with communities in Mai Ndombe to increase their voice and influence on land use policy, with a particular focus on those groups that are currently marginalized. By ensuring that communities are informed of the policy, legal and contractual issues that may affect their land use and other rights, WWF's aim is to support transparent decision-making processes that involve broad participation from communities.

WWF is also providing training for community-based monitoring and measuring of carbon stocks, with the aim of supporting improved engagement of communities in the REDD+ process.

REDD+ for people and nature

If we get it right, REDD+ could reduce greenhouse gas emissions while protecting biodiversity and supporting sustainable development that benefits forest-dwelling communities.

WWF's Forest & Climate Initiative is initiating REDD+ demonstration activities in the world's key forest landscapes, including the Amazon, Borneo and Congo

Basin, by working at scale with communities and governments to test approaches for getting REDD+ right.

We are working to ensure that REDD+ delivers on its promise of maintaining forests for the benefit of people and nature.

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Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

www.panda.org/forestclimate