An NCS Lighthouse

Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project

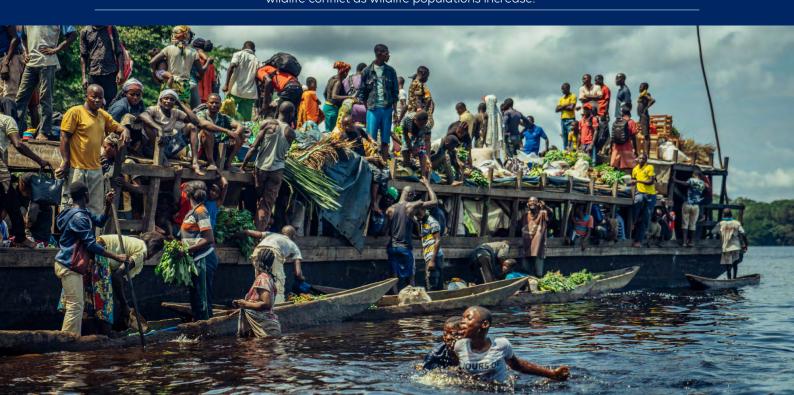|	
Project/Programme Type	Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) under the Reduced Emissions from Degradation and Deforestation (REDD+) mechanism. Project includes forestry, agriculture and wetlands actions.
Description	The Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project partners with the local community to protect 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 regranted 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 CO_2 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.

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Jean Robert Bwangoy

Head of DR Congo, Wildlife Works

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.

Nobody believed us first.

Jean Robert Bwangoy

Head of DR Congo, Wildlife Works

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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

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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."

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 to identify opportunities and barriers to investment in the NCS voluntary carbon market and also serves as a forum for knowledge sharing and technical capacity building to ensure natural climate solutions reach their full potential in abating climate change. In an effort to build trust in high quality NCS, the NCSA has established the NCS Lighthouse programme.

For more information visit www.wbcsd.org/ncsa and follow us on LinkedIn.

About NCS Lighthouse Programme

The NCS Lighthouse Programme aims at shining a light on projects and programmes that can be used as examples of good practice for supply and are a beacon in the path to developing trust in NCS for people, nature and climate. The NCS Lighthouses aim to help elevate the successful human, environmental, and climate stories behind these initiatives.

The NCS Lighthouses, selected based on screening criteria developed by an NCSA Taskforce comprising NGOs, businesses and solution providers, have demonstrated alignment to the NCSA's quality principles for NCS credits, as presented within 'Natural Climate Solutions for Corporates'.

The NCS Lighthouse Programme is made possible with generous funding support from the We Mean Business Coalition.

Disclaimer

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

The NCS Alliance and its members take no responsibility for the purchase, trade or retirement of credits from these projects and programmes. 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.