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# CENTRAL AFRICA REGIONAL PROGRAM FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – 2015: USAID support for rangers in Kahuzi-Biega National Park helps protect populations of critically endangered Grauer's gorillas.  
Photo by Andrew Kirby for USAID

## OVERVIEW

The Congo Basin rainforest is the world's second largest block of tropical rainforest, covering nearly 1.8 million square kilometers, or an area roughly the size of the United States east of the Mississippi River. It is home to some of the world's most spectacular plants and animals, and a key global "sink" of carbon that is vital in the fight against global climate change.

The forest is also an important source of food, shelter and livelihoods for the approximately 80 million people who live in the region. And its rich resources are increasingly being targeted by the international community to meet the growing global demand for food, timber, fiber, oil and minerals.

Although relatively intact compared to other rainforests, the forest faces growing threats as deforestation, forest degradation, animal poaching and trafficking and other pressures build. Rates of forest loss in some Congo Basin countries have more than doubled in the past decade, with even more ominous forecasts for the future unless concerted action is taken.

In 1995, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) in response to the growing international recognition of the importance of the Congo Basin forest and the need for a more coordinated approach to manage the resources sustainably.

Although initially focused on biodiversity and forest conservation, CARPE has evolved to become USAID's main program in Africa for climate change mitigation, and is an important driver for supporting local, national, regional, and international efforts to develop sustainable, low-emissions economies throughout the Congo Basin.

## CARPE at a Glance

The Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) is a long-term initiative of the United States Government to promote sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation in the Congo Basin through increased local, national and regional natural resource management capacity.

CARPE has been implemented in three phases:

**CARPE Phase I (1995-2002)** built a natural resources information base for the region, and developed local capacity, through a small grants program focused on three themes: forestry, protected area management, and environmental governance.

**CARPE Phase II (2003-2012)** implemented systematic land use planning to support forest and biodiversity conservation needs, and established partnerships and activities to create sustainable conservation management systems and climate change mitigation.

**CARPE Phase III (2012-2020)** is "institutionalizing" the conservation monitoring and management approaches developed in CARPE II by building individual, organizational and systems capacity necessary to ensure that the ecological integrity of the humid forest ecosystem of the Congo Basin can be sustained without USAID support.

# PROGRAMS

USAID's primary objective is to maintain the ecological integrity of the humid forest ecosystem of the Congo Basin through sustainable land management.

To help achieve this, the CARPE program uses a participatory approach that is both top-down and bottom-up. It works at the local level with forest-dwelling communities and at the national level with an array of government departments, regional bodies, international organizations, and the private sector.

USAID's partners include federal agencies, such as the Department of Interior (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, U.S. Geological Survey), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (U.S. Forest Service and the Foreign Agricultural Service), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Department of State, and the Department of Justice.

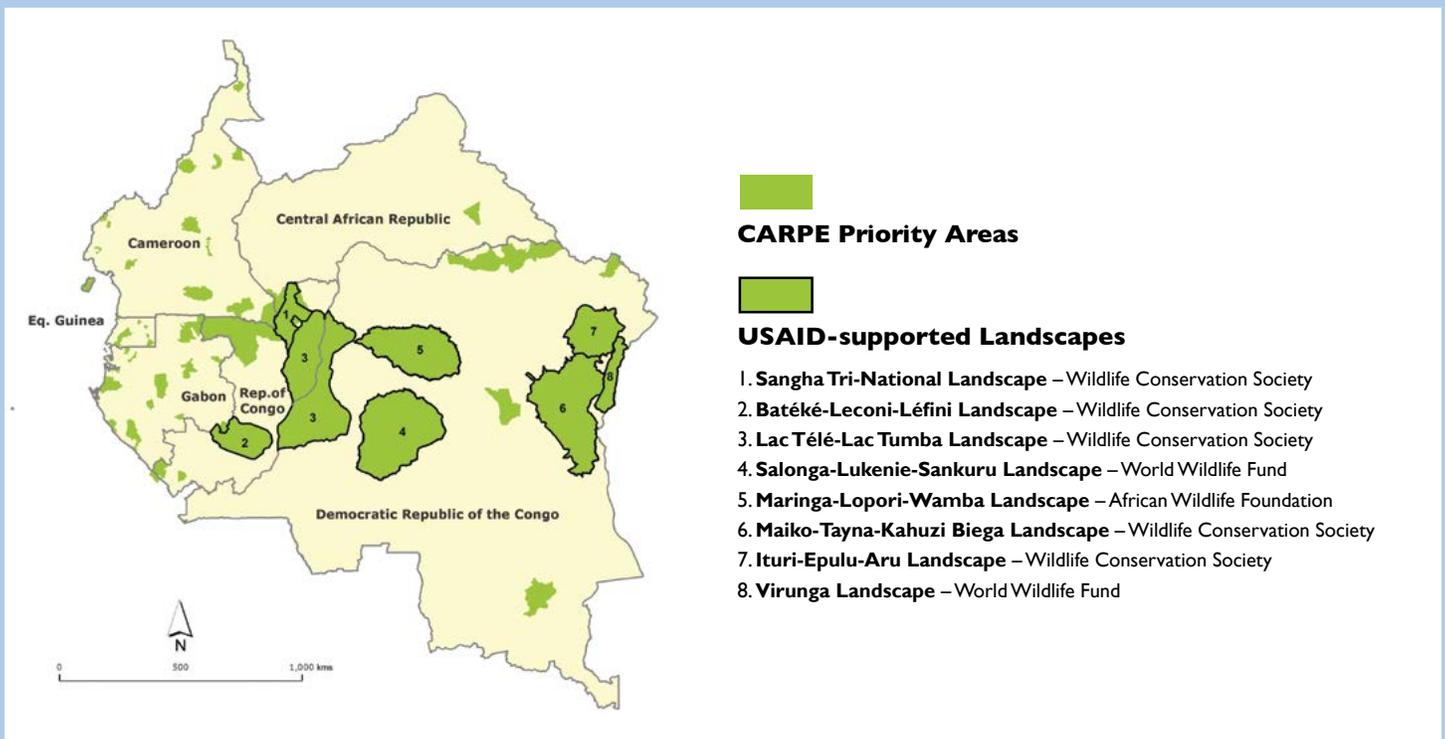
Partners also comprise an array of national, regional, and international organizations, including the African Wildlife Foundation, Wildlife Conservation Society, World Resources

Institute, World Wildlife Fund, the University of Maryland, the Central Africa Forest Satellite Observatory<sup>1</sup> and the Council for the Defense of the Environment through Legality and Traceability<sup>2</sup>.

USAID works with these partners to conserve key landscape environments, and mitigate forest and biodiversity loss and forest degradation threats, by contributing to the development and implementation of sound environmental policies and regulations, and strengthening capacities to monitor forest cover change and greenhouse gas emissions.

USAID is implementing two new, interdependent projects in the third phase of CARPE, "institutionalizing" the management of the Congo Basin forest through individual, organizational, and systems capacity building:

**The Central Africa Forest Ecosystems Conservation (CAFEC) project** focuses on developing sustainable forest management approaches, wildlife conservation and climate change mitigation activities in eight diverse natural forest landscapes.



<sup>1</sup> Observatoire Satellital des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale (OSFAC)

<sup>2</sup> Conseil pour la Défense Environnementale par la Légalité et la Traçabilité (CODELT)

**The Environmental Monitoring and Policy Support (EMAPS)** project focuses on improving national and regional environmental policies and regulations, building the capacity of public and private institutions for forest and biodiversity conservation, and boosting the quality and scope of conservation management, climate change mitigation and forest monitoring.

USAID's success with CARPE has helped spawn several pilot projects to reduce emissions from deforestation using a climate change mitigation policy framework. These projects have attracted investment from bilateral donors, including Norway, Sweden, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom; from multilateral donor funds at the World Bank and the African Development Bank; and from private organizations, such as Wildlife Works. In 2013, USAID and the Government of Norway entered into a significant partnership, coordinating efforts and combining the strengths of two of the largest forest conservation donors.

USAID's experience with global climate change activities provides CARPE with the technical and training expertise

to develop initiatives designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration and improve forest management. This includes capacity building to capture and analyze data on forest cover and forest cover change, developing methodologies for forest inventory and carbon stock assessment and guidance for local, participatory land use planning and management of protected areas. These are all key elements for creating sustainable systems for improving forest conservation and mitigating climate change.

USAID's anti-trafficking experience enhances CARPE's work with local communities to strengthen detection, apprehension, reporting and prosecution of poaching and other trafficking activity, and to boost economic incentives for local communities to protect the wildlife in their area. Projects focus on protecting wildlife and forests in hot spots in targeted landscapes within the CARPE program area, such as national parks and wildlife reserves. USAID, through its implementing partners, develops and deploys effective technologies and analytic approaches, such as the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) to combat these threats. Using SMART, eco-guards and rangers are able to

## Cross-cutting U.S. Government support

USAID is proactive in integrating other U.S. government agencies into its CARPE program, with each agency contributing its experience and expertise to meet the program goals:

- **U.S. Forest Service** – forest management; landscape and land use planning; institutional capacity building for sustainable forest management at the regional and national levels.
- **NASA, U.S. Geological Survey** – remote sensing technology; use of geographic information systems to monitor forest cover changes in biologically significant landscapes and surveys of keystone species populations and distribution.
- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** – capacity building for enforcement of forest and wildlife laws; surveys of keystone species; reduction of illegal hunting.
- **Department of State** – The Bureau of Oceans and International and Scientific Affairs enhances diplomatic relations with and among Congo Basin Forest Partnership countries to promote the U.S. Government's global climate change and biodiversity goals.
- **Department of Treasury** – The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility strengthens national REDD+\* readiness and planning; Climate Investment Fund's Forest Investment Program helps design and implement REDD+ pilot activities in target landscapes.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – 2014: Eco-guards receive equipment in Maringa-Lopori-Wamba Landscape. Photo by Billy Dodson for USAID

\*Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, plus conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks

collect real-time data on wildlife in the landscapes, thereby increasing patrol effectiveness by concentrating on high-intensity poaching zones within the protected areas, facilitating apprehension of poachers at entry and exit points and arresting and turning the criminals over for prosecution.

USAID partners with key regional organizations, such as the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), which promotes the sustainable management of the Congo Basin's forests and wildlife by improving communication, cooperation and collaboration; and with regional bodies, including the Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC), to coordinate common approaches to avoid trans-border "migration" of the drivers of deforestation, forest degradation and biodiversity loss due to differences in national policies and technical implementation capabilities.<sup>3</sup>



REPUBLIC OF CONGO – 2004: Forest elephant populations in the Sangha Tri-National Landscape are growing with the help of USAID's conservation efforts. Photo by © Remi Pognante for USAID

## Select Recent Accomplishments

- Improving the management of nearly 300,000 square kilometers of biological significant natural resources.
- Training a total of 8,178 individuals in natural resources management, biodiversity conservation, and global climate change.
- Strengthening anti-poaching efforts with the adoption of new management tools, advanced training of eco-guards and rangers, and the creation of new community natural reserves.
- Providing SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) training and equipment to more than 300 eco-guards and park rangers in protected areas.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – 2012: Eco-guards check a logging truck in the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park buffer zone. Photo by Jean Robert Onononga for USAID

## Activities under the Environmental Monitoring and Policy Support (EMAPS) Project

**Congo Basin Forest Monitoring** – USAID and Congo Basin countries are working with a consortium led by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to increase regional capacity for collecting and using satellite data, producing reliable information about forest cover and forest cover change for research, planning and policy-making.

**Strengthening Central Africa Environment Management and Policy Support** – World Resources Institute, in partnership with USAID, leads a consortium of partners focused on increasing national and regional capacity to develop effective conservation policies and management approaches by improving governance, monitoring and information dissemination mechanisms.

**Forest Resource Management** – The U.S. Forest Service, in partnership with USAID and the U.S. Department of State, is providing targeted technical assistance to both government institutions and Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) implementing partners, improving forest resource management and biodiversity conservation throughout the Congo Basin.

**For more information:**

[www.carpe.umd.edu](http://www.carpe.umd.edu)

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<sup>3</sup> COMIFAC states are Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Sao Tome and Principe.