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FOREST RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – 2012: Fishermen on the Ubangi River.
Photo by Toni Morelli for USAID



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – 2012: A U.S. Forest Service staff member reading a book with village children about the importance of forests.
Photo by Tony Morelli for USAID

OVERVIEW

The vast forests of the Congo Basin, the second largest rainforest in the world after the Amazon, are home to large populations of national and indigenous peoples living among an extraordinary array of plants and animals, many found nowhere else in the world.

Although the remote location of much of the region has helped shield it from exploitation and uncontrolled development, the forests of the Congo are under mounting pressure from the demands of growing populations and the incentives of lucrative international markets. Unsustainable logging, clearing for slash and burn agriculture and tree felling for charcoal production are taking an increasingly heavy toll.

Although the countries of the Congo Basin¹ recognize the threats to these valuable resources and are responding to them, most lack the expertise and financial resources to adequately manage and conserve them independently.

¹ The core Congo Basin countries are Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Republic of Congo

To harmonize and coordinate policy and regulations, the governments have come together through both national and regional institutions to improve forest management, and to address the global threats of biodiversity loss and climate change.

They have also joined with international partners, including the U.S. Government's Agency for International Development (USAID) and its Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE), to develop new systems and approaches for addressing issues such as forest cover monitoring, illegal logging, wildlife poaching and land use planning.

EMAPS at a Glance

USAID's Environmental Monitoring and Policy Support (EMAPS) project develops Central Africa's national and regional policy and regulatory capabilities, and improves forest monitoring, analysis and information dissemination to help maintain the ecological integrity of the humid forest ecosystem of the Congo Basin.

EMAPS creates policy-making environments for sustainable forest and biodiversity conservation management, and strengthens the capacity to monitor, analyze and disseminate information about forest cover change, forest-based greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sequestration and biodiversity at local, national and regional levels.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the University of Maryland, and the Central Africa Forest Satellite Observatory (OSFAC) collaborate to produce detailed analyses of forest change across the Congo Basin. To help ensure this information is included in policy-making and regulatory mechanisms, the NASA-led consortium partners with a second EMAPS consortium led by the World Resources Institute, and includes the African Wildlife Foundation, Wildlife Conservation Society, World Wildlife Fund and the Council for the Defense of the Environment through Legality and Traceability.²

EMAPS and the Central Africa Forest Ecosystems Conservation (CAFEC) project, which strengthens the management of targeted Congo forest landscapes and the mitigation of threats to biodiversity, are "institutionalizing" the management of the Congo Basin forests through individual, organizational and systems capacity building during the third phase of USAID's Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) program.

The EMAPS and CAFEC projects are complementary. The information collected and shared through the local efforts of CAFEC informs national and regional policy work, while improved policies supported under EMAPS allows for better conservation efforts and land use management at the local landscape level. They both align with and contribute to the Presidential Initiative on Global Climate Change and the National Strategy for Combatting Wildlife Trafficking.

² Conseil pour la Défense Environnementale par la Légalité et la Traçabilité (CODELT)

FOREST RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE CONGO BASIN

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS), through the Office of International Programs, is an important component of CARPE. In partnership with USAID and the U.S. Department of State, USFS provides targeted technical assistance to both government institutions and CARPE implementing partners to improve forest management throughout the Congo Basin.

USFS programs in Central Africa focus on building the capacity of regional and national institutions to execute their mandates in sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation.

Regionally, USFS works to coordinate and harmonize approaches, providing technical information, expertise, training and support to both field operations and planning bodies.

Nationally, it works principally with four Congo Basin countries – Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of Congo, Cameroon, and Gabon – to help them develop the institutions and mechanisms necessary to monitor, analyze, plan and protect the rich forest resources each country holds.

The Congo Basin Region – USFS supports the Forest Commission for Central Africa (COMIFAC)³, the regional body responsible for coordinating regional forest and environmental policy, and its sub-organizations, as they work to generate policy and best practice approaches in areas such as land use planning, natural resources management, wildlife trafficking, illegal logging and climate change.

USFS also supports the Congo Basin Forest Partnership⁴, a multi-stakeholder group created to enhance natural resource management and improve the standard of living in the Congo Basin that works closely with COMIFAC to promote the conservation and sustainable management of the region's forest ecosystems.

Other USFS regional activities include providing scholarships for ministry staff to obtain masters degrees in sustainable forest management and climate change; capacity building of ministry staff on remote sensing technologies and forest monitoring; and strengthening understanding of REDD+⁵ issues for country delegations involved in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

³ COMIFAC includes Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe

⁴ The Congo Basin Forest Partnership brings together more than 70 partners, including African countries, donor agencies and governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, scientific institutions and the private sector to coordinate efforts to sustain Congo Basin forest resources

⁵ Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, plus conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks

Democratic Republic of the Congo –The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is widely regarded as one of the richest countries in the world in terms of natural resources, with huge potential for large scale development and growth.

USFS provides targeted technical assistance to the government of DRC in addressing sustainable management of its USAID-supported landscapes, land use planning, forest monitoring, fire management, rangeland ecology and REDD+ programs. It also draws on its extensive expertise to support DRC in designing, executing and monitoring its national forest carbon inventory, and works closely with international initiatives to help establish effective monitoring, reporting and verification systems for sustainable forest management and climate change response.

USFS provides training courses and sponsors DRC ministry staff to continue their education through scholarships for masters degree programs and seminars in the U.S. focusing on climate change and watershed and protected area management.

Republic of Congo –The Republic of Congo's (ROC) vast, pristine forests, and the rich array of plant and animal life that they sustain, play a major economic and ecological role in the country.

USFS provides targeted technical assistance to the ROC government in addressing its USAID-supported landscapes, sustainably managing forest reserves, monitoring and conserving carbon stocks and administering its REDD+ programs. It also collaborates with other CARPE partners to provide technical assistance in fire research and management, forest ecology, mangrove and peat swamp mapping, and forest carbon measurement and monitoring.

USFS sponsors ROC ministry staff to continue their education through scholarships for masters degree programs and global seminars in the U.S. focusing on climate change, and watershed and protected area management.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – 2014: Forest cover in the Salonga landscape as seen from the air.
Photo by Cody Pope for USAID

Cameroon – Cameroon's immense forest resources and growing economy, including a strategic port that is an important transit point for Congo Basin timber, make it a key regional and global player.

USFS provides targeted technical assistance to the government of Cameroon as it works to balance sustainable natural resource management and economic growth, supporting effective land use planning, initiatives to combat wildlife trafficking and the implementation of a REDD+ strategy. It engages its global leadership and experience in forest inventory and sustainable forest management to help the government and concerned stakeholders design and implement a forest carbon monitoring system. And it uses its strong international expertise on timber tracking to strengthen the government's capacity to effectively monitor and regulate the timber trade.

USFS provides ongoing training and educational program scholarships in forestry and climate change issues for ministry staff and other specialists from the region, including supporting the University of Dschang's Forestry School to design a climate change masters degree curriculum, the first in the region.

Gabon – Gabon's pristine forests offer tremendous opportunities for eco-tourism development, biodiversity conservation, and preserving vast carbon stocks. At the same time, Gabon is implementing an economic diversification strategy to develop competitive manufacturing and service sector industries that will require new transportation, water, energy and communications infrastructure, increasing pressure on its natural resources.

USFS provides targeted technical assistance to the government of Gabon to develop a national land use plan to integrate activities such as logging, mining and agriculture, and to further develop and implement the Low Emissions Development Strategy laid out in Gabon's national Climate Change Plan. It also supports the Gabonese National Parks Agency to develop and implement national park management plans in priority biodiversity areas, build eco-tourism potential and strengthen capacity of park managers and policy makers.



*GABON: Gabon-Moukalaba Doudou National Park near Peny at base camp.
Photo by C. Winchester for USFS*



*DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – 2014: The U.S. Forest Service trained community members in fire management techniques.
Photo by USFS for USAID*

For more information:

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