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STRENGTHENING CENTRAL AFRICA ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND POLICY SUPPORT ACTIVITY



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, BANDUNDU PROVINCE – 2014: Provincial authorities from the Office for Environmental Coordination learn how to identify and map deforestation hot spots with USAID's support. Photo by Pascal Douard 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 "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. government'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.

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.¹

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 Combating Wildlife Trafficking.

¹ Conseil pour la Défense Environnementale par la Légalité et la Traçabilité (CODELT)

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USAID's Strengthening Central Africa Environmental Monitoring and Policy Support (SCAEMPS) activity serves as a bridge between biodiversity and forest conservation work, policy issues and local, national and international stakeholders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Republic of Congo (ROC).

SCAEMPS is part of CARPE's Environmental Monitoring and Policy Support (EMAPS) project. Together with other EMAPS activities, it focuses on improving national and regional environmental policies and regulations, building the capacity of public and private institutions for forest and biodiversity conservation and augmenting the quality and scope of forest monitoring, conservation management and climate change mitigation.

SCAEMPS also works with CARPE's Central Africa Forest Ecosystems Conservation (CAFEC) project, which focuses on developing sustainable forest management approaches, wildlife conservation and climate change mitigation activities in eight USAID forest landscapes. SCAEMPS enhances communication between CAFEC and EMAPS, reinforcing coordination between CARPE implementing partners, and helping to strengthen the participation, transparency and responsiveness of government actors, and the policies that impact forest use, management and access rights.

By increasing access to information from the local to the global level and ensuring that this information is used effectively, SCAEMPS actively supports improved governance and management of natural resources, protected areas and community lands and USAID's development objectives in the region.

SCAEMPS engages with a broad array of stakeholders to better understand available information, assess capacity and identify and fill policy gaps on issues including strengthening land use planning and local land tenure rights, advancing biodiversity conservation, combating wildlife crime and increasing the scope and effectiveness of forest monitoring.

SCAEMPS, with its partners in government ministries, is improving land use planning, launching national policy reform processes and promoting and supporting dialogue between government and civil society about policy changes affecting local land users. This work includes the development of Land Use Planning Atlases, which provide regularly updated information about priority areas by sector.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, MBANDAKA PROVINCE – 2014: USAID supported a technical training session for Directorate of Forest Inventory and Planning personnel – the people in charge of collecting data on artisanal cutting permits. Photo by Pascal Douard for USAID

It also works with civil society organizations, ensuring that citizens have the right and ability to influence decisions about the natural resources that sustain their communities, and supporting legal analysis of sector law and conflicts between land uses and policy and regulatory framework development.

SCAEMPS joins with USAID's landscape partners, capitalizing on more than 12 years of experience to improve land use planning at the landscape level. This includes strengthening on-going and new community-based natural resource management efforts and initiatives, piloting innovative approaches, scaling up successes and integrating lessons learned into policy reform with a focus on bolstering land tenure security through community forestry legislation.

It promotes and informs national and sector policy and procedural reform in order to ensure high conservation value forests remain standing, and that new community forestry and REDD+² regulations are applied at the local level. And it works to incorporate community land tenure considerations in land use allocations for large-scale agricultural and extractive activities.

² Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, plus conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks

SCAEMPS also supports REDD+ project development and implementation, clarifying legal frameworks and strengthening linkages between REDD+ and relevant reforms, including gender integration and local resource rights and opportunities created by new community forestry regulations in the DRC.

SCAEMPS is strengthening the enabling environment for the implementation of these new regulations, which provide opportunities for local inhabitants to have more secure rights over their land and natural resources, potentially empowering some of the world's most marginalized and vulnerable populations. It is helping to finalize implementing regulations, build capacity and awareness among local stakeholders and create robust oversight tools for government, as well as civil society, ensuring that community forestry contributes to local livelihoods and sustainable forest management.

SCAEMPS is supporting biodiversity conservation by improving coordination and distribution of information gathered from USAID's implementing partners across the eight USAID landscapes. It is strengthening the management of protected areas through training and new applications for mapping and classifying areas. And it is boosting efforts

to combat wildlife crime by addressing weaknesses in anti-trafficking and law enforcement systems, and improving the effectiveness of judicial systems in bringing those apprehended to justice.

This work includes collaborating closely on the development of the “Landscape Application,” which significantly increases SMART³ functionality and performance, implementing a national SMART database in DRC and integrating lessons from the landscapes into reform of DRC’s conservation laws. It also includes partnering closely with USAID CAFEC partners to develop a CARPE-wide wildlife crime strategy and integrate lessons learned into policy reform.

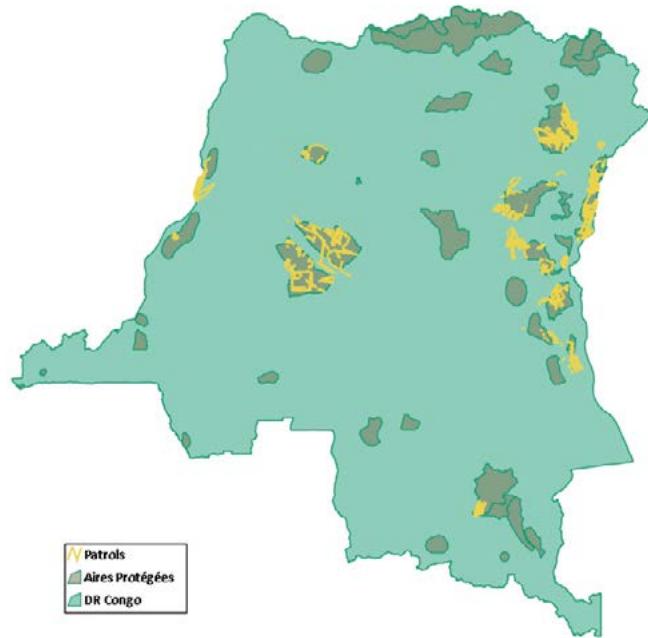
In the coming year, SCAEMPS, along with civil society activists and government authorities, will support an innovative pilot project at Kinshasa’s N’djili Airport designed to strengthen wildlife law enforcement at international borders.

SCAEMPS is increasing the capacity and effectiveness of satellite monitoring of Congo forests, working with USAID partners and respective environment ministries of the Congo Basin countries to improve data collection, provide opportunities for regional capacity building in the use of satellite data and mapping techniques and produce important and reliable information about forest cover and forest cover change. This information is key to generating carbon sequestration estimations and understanding long-term trends in forest carbon stocks.

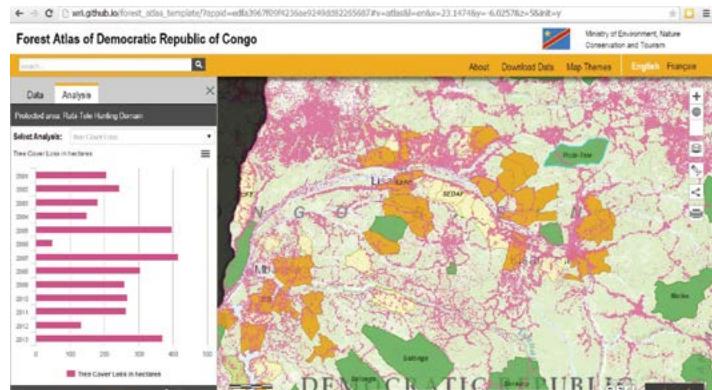
SCAEMPS is promoting transparency and access to natural resource information by combining forestry, mining and conservation land use data into public information atlases and online platforms. This improved monitoring and increased information sharing also helps strengthen land use planning and land tenure rights, improve forest and biodiversity conservation and complement enforcement infrastructures.

Select Recent Accomplishments

- Establishing institutional collaborations between key ministries for land use planning.
- Launching national reform processes for land use planning, including drafting roadmaps and updating Land Use Planning Atlases.
- Generating analysis of forest and REDD+ data from the Batéké-Leconi-Léfini landscape.
- Performing independent forest monitoring of extractive industries in the Republic of Congo.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – 2015: With USAID’s help, the protected areas management authority in DRC is vastly improving the quantity and quality of wildlife law enforcement patrols throughout the country’s protected area network. Graphics by Pascal Douard for USAID



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – 2015: Image of the online Forest Atlas of Democratic Republic of Congo. Courtesy of World Resources Institute for USAID

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