

DRC - Democratic Republic of the Congo

The tropical forests based in the North-eastern Congo are home to huge numbers of animals and plants including the Grauer's gorilla, Bosman's potto and the Congolese peacock. These vast forests are also home to about 40 million people. The area of the project is 260,000 hectares. The DRC has a lot of valuable minerals, including things that go into mobile phones, like tantalum.

Problems the community faces

There is huge poverty in the DRC. Average life expectancy is 41.1 years. 27% of men and 60% of women have not been to school.

There has been war and a lot of violence in many areas as armed groups try to control areas that have valuable resources like copper and tantalum ore. All this makes it very difficult for people to protect the trees and wildlife around them.

Most people are busy trying to survive. To grow food trees are cut down and burnt to clear areas of land and crops are planted. Over time the soil nutrients reduce so more areas of land are cleared to keep growing crops to feed families.

Another problem is that outsiders come to mine for metals or cut trees to sell the wood.



What's the project doing?

It is setting up two reserves run by the community. In these areas the forest is being conserved by –

- supporting people to make a living without destroying the forest
- training local people to be part of teams who check what's happening to the forest
- giving teams of local people the job of patrolling the forest



There are regular community meetings to discuss their needs and ideas of how they can make a living without destroying the forest.

People are changing to agroforestry which means they grow a mix of trees and a variety of crops. They also use organic fertilisers and crop rotation (changing the crop grown on different patches of land) which produces more food and stops them from needing to clear more land.

People are making crafts from forest products that they can sell.

There are regular meetings to make sure that everyone understands the laws about what they can hunt and fish and also discuss climate change and why the forest is so important.

They have started a micro credit scheme where people can borrow a small amount of money and get training in different ways of making a living from the land. 39 women and 1 man had the first loans.



The project runs sessions to understand how to build and use fuel-efficient stoves and so far over 700 have been built. They use a lot less wood and improve the health of community members, particularly women and children, as there are less toxic fumes, and they spend less time collecting wood in the forest.



The patrols in the forest are succeeding in stopping poachers by finding their traps and camps. They also check on groups of gorillas, chimps and other important species including okapi and Congolese peafowl. The teams have an income and are trained which improves the monitoring of the key species as well as the health of the forests.

People's stories

A local lady, Maman Beatrice Batobake, says about her new stove:

“before, when I did not have an energy efficient stove, I used a lot of firewood, my pans were blackened from smoke, and our eyes were sore and had colds due to the smoke.

But I notice now that with my energy efficient stove that I use less wood, my pans are not blackened from smoke because almost all of the smoke comes out of the chimney.”



Partner - Fauna and Flora International (FFI)