

Congo Basin Forests

Congo Basin forests cover an estimated 200 million hectares and constitute the second largest rainforest in the world. They provide food, shelter and livelihoods for over 50 million people living in the countries they cover: Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Sao Tome and Principe.



To date (2009), the Congo Basin forests have been storing an estimated 500 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year. As these forests have thus far remained relatively intact, with an annual estimated rate of deforestation of 0.16%, they have accounted for very little of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. The significance of the Congo Basin forests as a sink for carbon dioxide, therefore makes their protection vital for regulating climate.



Increased logging, changing patterns of agriculture, population growth and oil and mining industries are depleting the forests. Without the right policies and immediate action, the Congo Basin forests will be destroyed. The effects on climate will be disastrous.



The future of the Congo Basin forests depends on the ability of governments, NGO partners, the private sector and the international community to consider the sustainable management of these forests as integral to achieving sustainable economic development and alleviating poverty in the Congo Basin.



The Congo Basin Forest Fund

In June 2008, the multi-donor Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF) was created to take preventative measures to protect the Congo Basin forests. Launched by former UK Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, Norway's Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg, African Development Bank President, Dr. Donald Kaberuka, and the ministers responsible for forests from Congo Basin member states of the Central Africa Forest Commission (COMIFAC), the CBFF received an initial capitalization of approximately EUR 118 million from the UK and Norway.



Gordon Brown



Jens Stoltenberg



Donald Kaberuka



A governing council manages the fund, defines strategic directions and actively reviews and endorses proposals. Chaired by former Canadian Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon Paul Martin and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Prof. Wangari Maathai, the council also includes the COMIFAC presiding minister, the secretary-general of the Central African Economic Commission, a representative of civil society organizations active in the region, a donor representative and the African Development Bank Operations Sector Vice President.



Paul Martin



Wangari Maathai

CBFF activities complement certain aspects of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan, which seeks to harmonize the forest sector legal and regulatory frameworks in Congo Basin countries. The CBFF also works closely with Central African governments and other stakeholders such as the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, which coordinates funding for the forest sector in the region.

The CBFF Secretariat is based in Tunis, at the African Development Bank, and also has representatives at the Bank's field offices in Yaoundé and Kinshasa. The secretariat is responsible for managing the CBFF and administering its grants. In addition, a fund management agent manages small- and medium-sized grants to support local and national civil society organizations interested in participating in CBFF activities.



The Congo Basin Forest Fund and the REDD+ process in Central Africa

The UNFCCC meetings held in Bali in 2008, recognized REDD (Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from the Deforestation and Forest Degradation) as an attenuating mechanism for the effects related to climate change. The COP-15 held in December 2009 in Copenhagen explicitly recognized the interest of integrating forest conservation in the REDD mechanism, resulting in the concept of REDD+.

This recognition strengthens the position held by Ministers of the Congo Basin countries who adopted in September 2009 (Kinshasa) a joint resolution, relative to the reduction of emissions resulting from deforestation, forest degradation, conservation and sustainable management of forests and the increase of forest carbon stocks (REDD+). This expressed willingness has been endorsed by the Heads of States of Central Africa during their October 2009 conference in Kinshasa.

Given this strong commitment to development expressed at a very high level and reiterated in the Brazzaville Declaration of April 21 2010, the Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF) is committed to collaborate with UN/REDD and the CBFP in supporting the COMIFAC and its member countries in the development of a national REDD process and the establishment of measuring and monitoring systems for carbon forest stocks and fluxes (MRV) at the regional and national scale. Moreover, around 20 REDD+ Pilot projects initiated by COMIFAC members and NGOs, are currently being financed and/or finalized for a total estimated 30 million Euro.

The CBFF continually organizes information campaigns and awareness in the countries of the sub-region with the aim of increasing the quantity and technical quality of propositions for REDD+ projects to be submitted to the CBFF for financing.

The Ministers of the member countries of the COMIFAC have reiterated during their recent summit in April 2010 in Brazzaville their wish to store the REDD+ funds for Central Africa within the CBFF. This additional function will allow the Fund to respond more efficiently to the two-fold challenge of poverty reduction and sustainable management of the dense tropical forests of the CBFF.

Congo Basin Forest Fund Grants

What do we fund?

CBFF funds transformative, innovative projects aimed at reducing the rate of deforestation and alleviating poverty that touch upon one or several of the following four areas:

1. Forest Management and Sustainable Practice
2. Livelihoods and Economic Development
3. Monitoring, Assessment and Verifications.
4. Benefits from an international regime on REDD and payments for ecosystem services.

CBFF also funds work identified by the governing council and CBFF partners in specific areas not covered by proposals.

Eligible institutions include:

- Governments, civil society organizations duly registered in a Congo Basin country.
- Community-based organizations
- NGOs preferably based in Africa and/or that provide evidence of partnership with African institutions.
- Private forestry sector operators and institutions.

Proposals are accepted from one or several partner organizations working together. Collaborative proposals from partners (government and civil society, government and the private sector) are particularly welcome.

Selection Criteria

- How will the project contribute to CBFF's overall objectives?
Will it reduce the rate of deforestation and reduce poverty in forest communities?
- How does the proposal contribute to the thematic areas?
- Does the project conform to the COMIFAC Convergence Plan?
- How innovative and transformative is the proposal?
- Where a national REDD strategy is in place, how does the project contribute to its implementation?

The Congo Basin Forest Fund 2009 Portfolio

The first call for proposals was issued in 2008. The following projects were selected in 2009.

Achieving Conservation and Improving Livelihoods through the Sustainable Management of Community-Based Forest Operations in Cameroon

A 3-year grant to the Rainforest Alliance to implement a project in Cameroon to assist 12 communities that have approved forest management plans to embark on a progressive approach to Forest Stewardship Council certification of timber and non-timber forest products. This certification takes into account economic, environmental and social factors. In addition, the project will support the same communities to engage in the process and benefit from payments for ecosystem services.

Alternatives to Mangrove Destruction for Women's Livelihoods in Central Africa

A 3-year grant to OPED (Organization for Environment and Sustainable Development) to implement a project in Cameroon designed to reduce the rate of mangrove deforestation and thereby reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth by helping the women who rely on mangrove forest ecosystems for their livelihoods to adopt profitable aquaculture and fish preservation technology. This technology will reduce demand for mangrove wood as fuel for fish smokers, a practice that currently accounts for more than 80% of mangrove forest losses in southern Cameroon. The technology will also reduce post-harvest losses and, therefore, increase local revenues from the sale of prawns and fish.

Building Foundations for Success: Community Participation is Central to REDD

A 3-year grant to FERN, an advocacy and capacity building NGO network based in Belgium, to build the capacity of NGOs in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon to ensure that community rights are incorporated into national and international REDD policies and programs, and to develop and advocate for transparent mechanisms to ensure that REDD revenues are transferred from national to local institutions. The project will also seek to create civil society coalitions to work at different levels on REDD-related issues.

Management and Innovative Sustainable Exploitation of Forest Resources

A 2-year grant to African Wildlife Foundation for a project in the Bongandanga Territory of Equateur Province in the Democratic Republic of Congo to reduce deforestation, degradation and poverty by improving the management of their forest resources. This will ameliorate the quality of life for an estimated 25,000 people living in the Maringa-Lopori-Wamba landscape. Socio-economic case studies on forest resource use and extraction methods used in the pilot site and studies on the chain of custody and marketing systems for selected non-timber forest products will be made. A pilot project will develop a dedicated resource base for biomass and wood energy.

Partnership for the Development of Community Forests

A 3-year grant to Nature + asbl to implement a project aimed at strengthening community forestry initiatives in the Eastern and Southern regions of Cameroon. The purpose of the project is to develop community forests at the technical, institutional and organizational level. The project will cover over 40,000 ha where an estimated 20,000 people live. Expected outcomes of the project will be improved ecological and economic sustainability of these forests and the transparent and equitable management of income by management entities.

Phasing out Slash-and-Burn farming with Bio-char

ADAPEL, a local environment and development NGO in the Democratic Republic of Congo, has been awarded a 2-year grant to implement a pilot project in 10 villages in Equateur Province to replace slash-and-burn farming with a system that uses bio-char, a carbon-rich product derived from biomass found on previously cleared forest land to enrich soil fertility and improve agricultural yields. When bio-char is sequestered in soils, it maintains soil fertility and constitute a stable and easily measurable carbon sink. Bio-char thus enriches the soil and makes it more productive, which lessens the pressure to encroach on forest land. Using crop residues to produce bio-char also generates renewable energy in a low-cost manner, and this reduces local dependency on firewood.

Promoting Community Land Tenure Rights in the Congo Basin

A 2-year grant to the Rainforest Foundation in partnership with the Cameroon Centre for Environment and Development to work with regional NGOs

to develop recommendations for legislation to ensure more secure land tenure for people dependent on forests in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The legislation will provide a sound foundation for community-based approaches to forest management, small forest enterprise, and mechanisms for paying ecosystem services.

Quantifying Carbon Stocks and Emissions in the Forests of the Congo Basin

A 3-year grant to the World Resources Institute and several international and regional partners for a project in the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In the Republic of Congo, the project will quantify forest carbon emissions from forest loss and degradation using carbon accounting methodologies as per the guidelines of the intergovernmental panel on climate change. The project will also help develop national carbon accounting strategies, and thus position the country to benefit from future forest carbon payment schemes. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the project will build the capacity of OSFAC (the satellite observatory for Central African forests) to monitor forest carbon.

Reforestation of Degraded Areas and Promoting Value-Addition for Non-Timber Forest Products in the Sanaga Maritime Region of Cameroon

A 3-year grant to Cameroon-Ecology, an environmental group, for a project in six villages in the Southwest Province that promotes participatory management and reforestation of community forests. Developing non-timber forest products with high economic potential, such as honey products and *Ricinodendron Heudelotii* (djasan), are a priority for this project.

Stabilizing Carbon Emissions in the Sangha Tri-National Forest Complex through Sustainable Financing and Improved Livelihoods

A 3-year grant to support a grant-making program in the Sangha Tri-National Park, which straddles Cameroon, the Republic of Congo and the Central Africa Republic. Created in 2000 to protect forests rich in biodiversity, the park has integrated a land-use strategy to stabilize forest carbon while generating revenues to reduce poverty in the region. The foundation was created in 2007 as a long-term funding mechanism to support park priorities, including community-based activities.

Sankuru Community "Fair Trade" Carbon Initiative: Innovative Management of Community-controlled Protected Areas

A 3-year grant to the Bonobo Conservation Initiative in partnership with the Democratic Republic of Congo Park authorities and local NGOs to prevent deforestation and protect biodiversity by enhancing community management in the Sankuru Natural Reserve. The project will build upon existing legal agreements to operationalize the reserve, thereby positioning it for long-term financing, particularly in "fair trade" carbon that will help reduce poverty and ensure significant benefits to residents.

Reconciling the Needs of the Logging Industry with those of Forest Dependent People

A 3-year grant to Biodiversity International to design innovative approaches to forest management in Cameroon, Gabon and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Multiple-use management integrates timber and non-timber production and should reduce conflict among stakeholders while ensuring access of forest-dwelling people to critical resources.

Bonobo Conservation Concession in Equateur Province in Democratic Republic of Congo

A 3-year grant to Conservation International Foundation for a pilot project that transforms a 485,000 ha former timber concession into a conservation concession whose natural resources are managed in a sustainable manner. The objective is to stop deforestation, land degradation and the loss of globally important biodiversity by having local communities manage resources in a sustainable manner while developing a local economy based on conservation.

Working with Communities to Reduce Deforestation and Alleviate Poverty

A 3-year grant to the Zoological Society of London to reduce deforestation and forest degradation in the Virunga-Hoyo Region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The expected carbon incomes will provide incentives for poor local communities to manage their forests and agro forestry better in a buffer area around the corridor, reduce their use of charcoal by using fuel-efficient stoves and increase reforestation by creating tree nurseries. The project will also build capacity of national forest conservation institutions by increasing the areas of conserved/managed forests by at least 1,500km².

Involving Bagyéli Indigenous Peoples in the Sustainable Management of Campo Ma'an National Park

A 15 months grant to ROCAME, a network of NGOs in Cameroon, to help create an environment where indigenous forest dwellers (Bagyéli pygmies) can continue their traditional practices that are compatible with conservation and development. This will help reduce ecosystem degradation and poverty in Campo Ma'an, a Bagyéli site.

