

Q1 2020

Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project
Impact Report

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WORKS**



Education

Four schools were completed this quarter in four villages, including the Pygmy village of Ikita; 2 new buildings were built in in Bokebene and Nselenge; and uniforms and school supplies were distributed in Ikita and Nsongo



Health

The construction of a mother and child clinic is in its final stages in Ibali

Agriculture

High yield cassava was introduced in ten villages, as part of ongoing agriculture intensification programs

Fisheries

The first fishponds are being built in Loombe for fish production

Biodiversity

Monitoring has shown increased presence of endangered species in the southwestern corner of the project area

Investing into the community's youth, building capacity to address critical healthcare needs, and providing economic alternatives have been the main focus of the Mai Ndombe REDD+ project's work in Q1 2020.

This past quarter, the project finished building a school in a Batwa Pygmy village, a highly discriminated and marginalized community. Up until Wildlife Works and project partner Era-Congo arrived in this village, the Pygmies had no access to education or adequate healthcare.

The project has brought joy and opportunity to this village by building a school, providing salaries to the teachers and supplying students with uniforms and school supplies. The project has also built additional schools in three Bantou villages this past quarter (Inunu, Lobeke and Nsongo). These schools have been recognized by the National Government, who will as a result be supporting the project by paying the teacher's salaries.

Other significant developments in the first quarter of 2020 include the final stages of building a first-ever clinic in the village of Ibali, a village that faces high maternal mortality rates and which was also hit very hard by the recent measles epidemic. The project has also focused on providing communities with high-yield planting materials for food security, building fisheries in communities that once relied on lake Mai-Ndombe for their livelihoods, and continued biodiversity monitoring.



Providing access to education

Providing access to education has far-reaching benefits to a community that will have a profound and lasting impact on their health and prosperity, as well as that of the forest they live in: Children of mothers who have had an education are at lower mortality risk, and communities with more educated young people are less destructive of the forest.

During Q1, 2020 four school buildings have been completed in Ikita (the Pygmy village), Nsongo, Inunu and Lobeke, important progress toward the project's commitment to build schools in each village in the project area.

In partnership with the local community, Wildlife Works provided construction materials and worked with the community on building these schools.

School uniforms have also been distributed in Ikita and Nsongo and all schools of the project area received recognition from the National Government, who will be paying for teacher salaries. This is a crucial development in enabling the project to begin benefitting from public social services that have been traditionally unavailable in this remote area.



Highlights



Maternal health clinic in Ibali

For the first time, a clinic is being built in the village of Ibali as part of the project's commitments to the communities under the Carbon Rights Agreement between the project and the communities within the project area.

Maternal mortality rates are very high in Ibali with approximately 1,300 deaths per 100,000 births. Malaria is also highly endemic in this area, and the number one cause of death of children. The project is building this clinic to help support women and children's health, helping to fill a critically important gap where local and national government services are lacking.





High yield cassava

High-yielding cassava materials have been introduced to villages throughout the project area after overwhelming success in a demonstration garden in the Lokanga village. The demonstration showed the community how high-yield vegetal material can deliver tremendous productivity even in marginal soil: The harvest from the demonstration plot, made with community members, showed ten times the productivity compared to traditional cassava varieties. Each community subsequently requested access to this cassava varietal.

Unsustainable extensive slash and burn agriculture is the main driver of deforestation in the project area, with low yield cassava production being the key driving force. Planting high-yield cassava in fallows and secondary forest will significantly reduce the pressure on primary forest conversion, permitting the community to grow far more food on less land.



Fishponds in Loombe

Ten fishponds are being constructed in Loombe as a first demonstration of the ability for local communities to sustainably produce fish from farms in order to improve their livelihoods.

People in the project area have historically relied on fish production from Lake Mai-Ndombe. With the lake substantially depleted from overfishing, the community has come to rely heavily on low-yielding cassava cultivation for food security, putting pressure on the forest. By bringing sustainable fish farming activities to the local villages, and combining this with high-yielding cassava, the project will help improve the community's nutrition and alleviate the pressure on the forest.

In a joint effort, project partner Era-Congo has provided material and a fishpond building engineer, and local community members are helping with the construction of the fishponds.





Biodiversity monitoring shows Elephants returning to the project area

Biodiversity monitoring is an important tool the project utilizes to protect the forest habitat and its endangered species. A team specialized in biodiversity monitoring tracks high biodiversity areas twice a month, along with local community members who have been trained for that purpose.

An key indicator of success for the Mai Ndombe REDD+ project is the return of elephants to the project area, as well as the ongoing protection of endangered species with continued presence in the area. In Q1 the project monitored the growth of both elephant and Bonobo populations — with elephants specifically at a high pace. This is an exciting development for the project – one that has also come with new warning signs.

The biodiversity monitoring team convenes regularly with villagers, who are able to provide important information related to poaching activities in the area. In Q1 2020, monitoring showed a new and increasing presence of poachers in the area. This troubling development is one to which the project is building a rapid response, and will remain an area of continued focus by the project going forward. The Mai Ndombe project team continues to engage with their Wildlife Works colleagues at Kasigau, learning and adapting best practices in patrolling and enforcement to the challenging circumstances of this very remote area.



The Measles epidemic

Unusually high water in the Mai Ndombe lake contributed to the devastating 2019 measles outbreak in the project area, with hundreds of children still suffering every day in the first quarter of 2020. The outbreak severely tested the project, and the team dedicated themselves completely to bringing effective, timely relief to the communities in the project area whose lives were at stake.

The project spent nearly \$50,000 USD on emergency medical response, buying medicine and renting planes to bring doctors and nurses to the villages. Many lives were saved as a direct result of the project's action and response.

Now that the measles epidemic has passed, preventing the occurrence of such outbreaks is the focus for the project moving forward. The project plans to team up with public health officials for vaccination campaigns during the dry season, to prevent the possibility of the epidemic resurfacing during the next rainy season.



Challenges



Delay of construction activities

Excess inundation in the project area during Q1 2020 made it impossible to get construction materials out to the local villages to start up new projects. For example, the community in Ibali had to collect sand and stones from deep in the water to get the materials they needed.

The project will address this issue by preparing stockpiles of local materials during the dry season prior to starting upcoming construction activities.

The unpredictable and powerful character of the local weather and climate is one of the critical factors that makes work in the project such a challenge, which must always be planned around and adapted to.



Impact Over Time



Forest Impacts

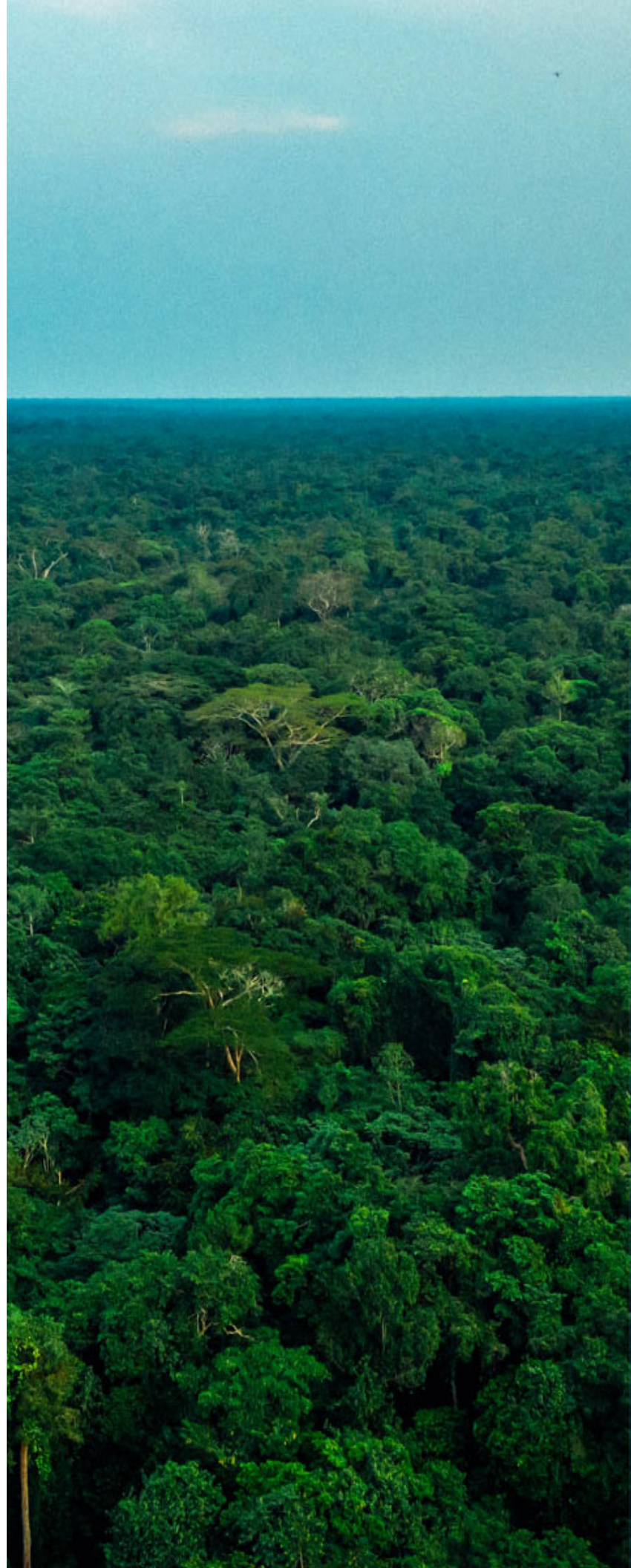


300,000 hectares

hectares of Congo Basin
rainforest protected

13,322,276

tonnes of emissions
avoided to date



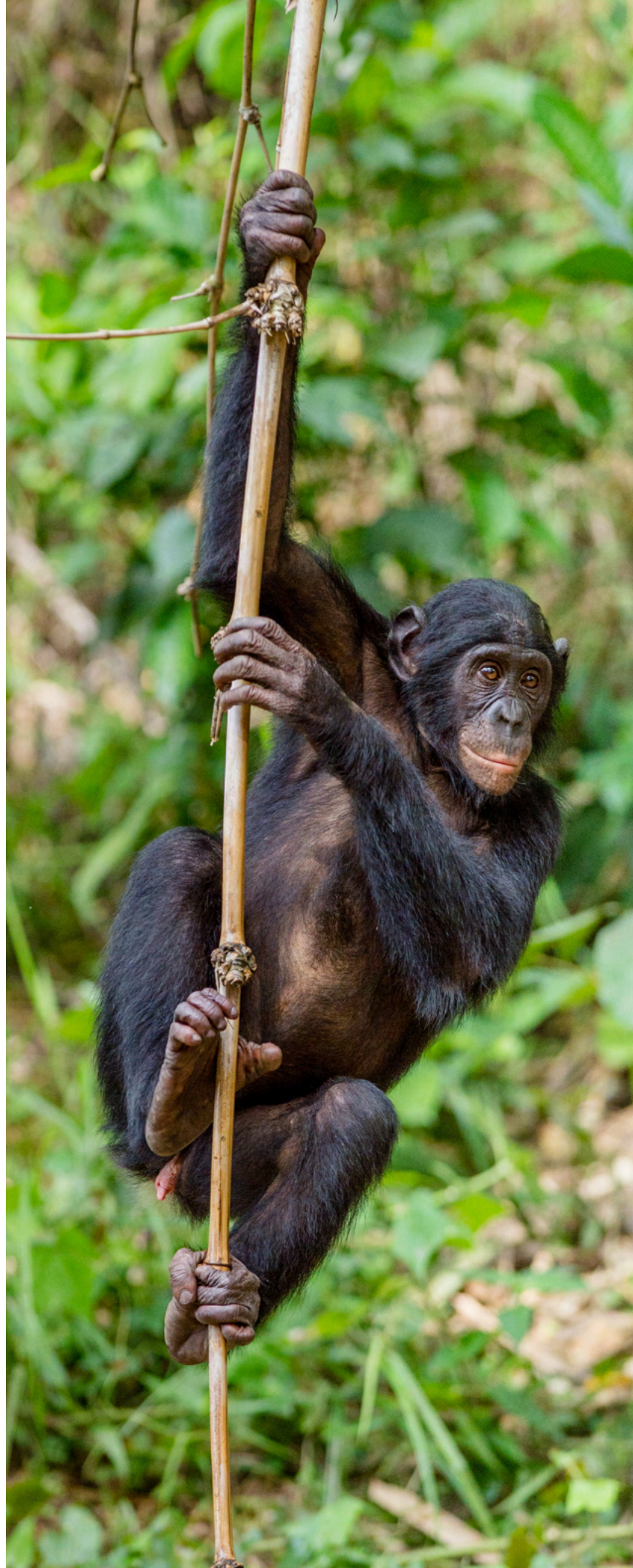
Impact Over Time

Wildlife Impacts



Two endangered species protected: the Bonobo and Forest Elephant.

The current population of the endangered Bonobo (only found in the Congo Basin) is estimated between 30,000 - 50,000. About **20** Bonobos live in the protection area. The current population of the Forest Elephant (only found in the Congo Basin) is estimated at 100,000. About **30** Forest Elephants live in the project area.



Impact Over Time

Community Impacts



4 schools built

3 under construction

3,000 people

receiving health services

112 local people

employed



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One forest at a time**

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