

# Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project **Impact Report**

**Q3-Q4  
2021**



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# Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project

📍 The Democratic Republic of the Congo

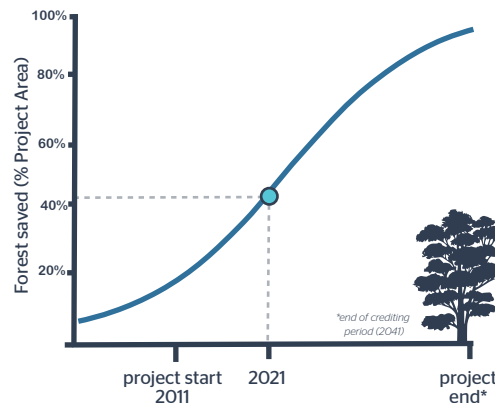
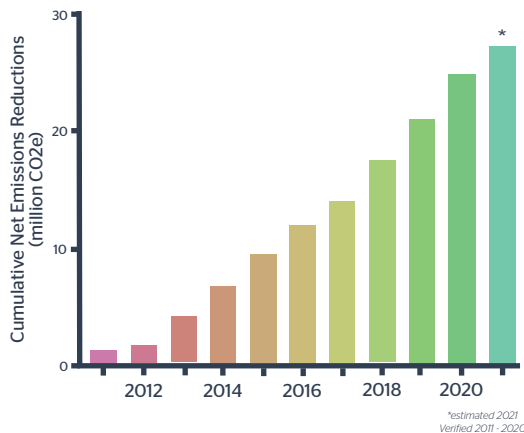
EVER  
LAND

Developer: Wildlife Works

Standards: VCS, CCB

## Half year summary

The community-run fish pond initiative is continuing to expand through the project area as a more sustainable option to wild-caught fish, with new successes in breeding the African sharptooth catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*). Women are leading agricultural intensification in the project zone through Community Based Organisations (OBs), securing food and alternative income through the establishment of a new cassava species. Construction continues on new educational, water and healthcare facilities, with a new clinic in Ibali set to open in early 2022.



### IUCN Red List species protected



African forest elephant



Bonobo



Okapi



Brown cheeked hornbill



Leopard



African dwarf crocodile

## About the Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project

The Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project protects 300,000 hectares (740,000 acres) of critical bonobo and forest elephant habitat within the world's second-largest intact rainforest and some of the most important wetlands on the planet, the Congo Basin. This project reduces the principal drivers of forest and biodiversity loss and is charting a new pathway for community prosperity through comprehensive investments into the surrounding local communities, which are among the most impoverished in the world. Such investments include building and renovating schools, providing healthcare services (such as access to immunizations), supporting food security and nutrition (such as through agricultural diversification), and providing capacity building activities that empower local communities.

**24,263,207** tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions avoided to date





# Impact Highlights

## The fish ponds continue to develop in Loombe & Nkondi

The agricultural intensification activities have expanded across Loombe and Nkondi over the last two quarters. Farming of fish is not traditionally undertaken by the local communities. Whilst some villages are home to fisherman, they predominantly use the wild caught method and as such, aquaculture is a very new concept. Unfortunately, traditional wild-caught fishing has proved to be unsustainable in the Mai Ndombe region, leading to depletion of the wild populations as a result of over-fishing. To sustain their food supply and potential income, the local communities have decided to continue to utilise their carbon offset benefit share towards expanding and transforming the fish pond initiatives.

Tilapias, which were introduced into the new ponds in early 2021, are now flourishing and ready to be harvested. An initial harvesting showcase was undertaken in late 2021 to demonstrate the potential income and new food source for the community.

Community members are also exploring the introduction of catfish into the aquaculture system as they have high potential for production and are very easy to manage and ultimately harvest. The most common catfish species in Mai Ndombe lake is the African sharptooth catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*), which has an eel-like appearance and is very resilient to a wide range of habitat conditions. It has recently been overexploited in the region, and thus aquaculture is the best solution to ensure its long-term use as a food source for the local community.



Nsapu, T.D., 2021. Stock assessment and management implications of African catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*) in Lake Mai-Ndombe, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Doctoral dissertation, 부경대학교).





## Community Based Organisations (OBs) empower women leading the agricultural intensification initiative

The Gender Empowerment Team has taken the lead for increased crop yield and agriculture intensification activities in the project area. Community based organizations (Organisation de Base - OB) have been organized in Kesenge, Nselenge, Ntono Nkomele, Ibali, Mpili, Mbwe Nzey and Nkundo. The women-led OBs have been instrumental in setting up cassava plantations in these villages, some of which are soon to be harvested.

A few decades ago, fungi were destroying the cassava crops around Mai Ndombe, leading to crop failures around the country. A university study was conducted to explore other cassava varieties more resistant to fungi and found one specific species named "Obama" which proved to be both resistant as well as highly productive. Further testing of the Obama cassava has been undertaken in the Kinshasa region, leading to a 6-fold improvement in yield over the traditional varieties.

The OBs have utilised this newfound cassava species in demonstration plantations across the participating villages. The communities have already seen a significant improvement in the cassava production and are very keen to adopt this variety more widely. Fortunately, the Obama cassava is more successful in marginal soils rather than primary forest soils, meaning that it works to alleviate the deforestation risk across the Mai Ndombe project area. This program has been very successful and will expand to more villages in the project area.

Whilst OBs have proven to be a useful avenue for women's empowerment in agricultural intensification, they have also allowed women to voice their concerns about other issues directly impacting the community. For example, in early 2022 the villages were fighting epidemics in two villages. The OB womens' groups were the first to alert project staff about this serious challenge, ensuring that a portion of the project benefits was shared to alleviate this health crisis. The OBs are keen to explore new techniques to efficiently monitor epidemics in the future.







## Continued construction of healthcare, water and educational facilities

Improved healthcare is one of the most important activities in the Mai Ndombe REDD+ project given the very poor health and nutritional status of community members across the project area. Over 1/3 of children under 5 are malnourished and many are at high risk from malaria, together leading to a high mortality rate of 220 per 1000 children. To alleviate this healthcare crisis, new facilities are continuing to be built in the project zone. A healthcare clinic has finished construction in Iballi over the final two quarters of 2021. All relevant laboratory equipment has been purchased and the healthcare team will begin training in early 2022. The Minister of Health has appointed a doctor and nurse to lead the clinic, with an opening expected in the coming months.

Educational facilities are non-existent or very insufficient in most villages across the project zone. A lack of education in the region has been directly correlated with increased deforestation and negative health outcomes (including child mortality, malnutrition and respiratory infection). The construction of two new schools has been completed in Nselenge and Bokebene during the second half of 2021, totaling 12 schools since the project began. Four more school construction projects have broken ground in Bosongo, Nkondi, Mpata Mbalu and Lokanga. The foundations have been laid in these villages and masonry work is under way. Construction materials are ready for 3 more schools for which foundation will start during S1 of 2022.

A water drilling machine has delivered clean water in Iballi, Nselenge, Loombe, Lokanga, Mbale and in Inongo in late 2021. Without this water rig, villages dig shallow wells or collect water from contaminated rivers.



*The Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project Third Monitoring & Implementation Report (M3). 2021. VCS v3.4; CCB v2.0. Verra Project Platform. (<https://registry.verra.org/app/projectDetail/VCS/934>)*







# Challenges & Opportunities

## Poaching is on the rise

Over the last two quarters, there has been an increase in the number of poaching incidents within the project zone, with poachers targeting the endangered *Bonobos*; an ape species very similar to chimpanzees. Biodiversity assessments have confirmed that *Bonobos* were once distributed within the forest far away from villages and lake shores, but have recently started approaching villages due to reduced pressure from the local communities. Camera traps have also revealed that elephants seem to be slowly returning to the area, migrating from Yumbi and Lukolela into the project zone. The movement of endangered species represents an improved connectivity of the landscape.

However, as new species migrate close to the villages, they are at higher risk of poaching and other human-wildlife conflicts. In a recent incident, community members alerted the project developers of an incoming poacher, who fled the area before being captured. Whilst unsuccessful in apprehending this specific poacher, the participation of the community in monitoring for illegal activities has been instrumental in discouraging such activities.

