

HALF YEARLY IMPACT REPORT

MAI NDOMBE REDD+ PROJECT
Q3-Q4 2022



Summary



The Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project protects 300,000 hectares 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 least economically developed in the world. Such investments include building and renovating schools, building hospitals and clinics and providing healthcare services (such as access to immunizations), supporting food security and nutrition via agricultural diversification, and scaling sustainable livelihood activities that empower local communities and reduce pressure on the forest.

In Q3-Q4 2022, agriculture intensification activities expanded to include soybean, cassava and plantain in more villages across the project zone under the leadership of the women's community based organizations. Healthcare infrastructure continues to expand across the region, including new laboratory equipment and staff for the Abbot medical Lab. Three new schools have been constructed and are currently in use. New patrol transects were established and new cameras installed in an illegal logging hotspot near Kesenge as a response to community informant tips. Cameras captured movement of endangered species in the area, representing an improved connectivity of the landscape.

HIGHLIGHTS



Growth in agricultural intensification activities

The project has introduced new high yield cassava and soybean varieties and continues work to diversify food production through the introduction of new activities such as bee keeping, goats, cattle and fish farming. These agriculture intensification and crop yield improvement activities are helping stabilize the forest degradation front while improving nutritional conditions and providing income generating opportunities for the communities.

Between July and December 2022, agriculture intensification activities expanded to the village of Mbwe Nzey, building upon previous activities in Loombe and Nkondi with all animals now safe in new enclosures. High yield Soybean and Cassava plantations have also become permanent activities based on recent success, and 3 fishponds have been built in Mbwe Nzey and 5 in Lobalu to provide an important source of nutrition for the communities, particularly for children under the age of 5. Clarias and other local species have been harvested in Loombe and have been successfully released in these Mbwe Nzey and Lobalu ponds.

The plantain macro-propagation site, set-up in Inongo in February 2021, has produced to date 6000 plants and is proving to be one of the more promising agriculture intensification activities. These have now been planted in the village of Nkundo and are showing promising growth as more plants become macro-propagated at the same site. This activity helps to alleviate deforestation pressures by targeting efficient use of fallow areas. A second plantation is currently being explored, but the site is yet to be identified.

The Gender Empowerment Team continues to lead agriculture intensification activities in the project area. Community based organizations (Organisation de Base - OB) were established in Kesenge, Nselenge, Ntoto Nkomele, Iballi, Mpili, Mbwe Nzey, Bosando and Nkundo near the end of 2021, and have expanded to the villages of Lobalu, Bakele, Bokebene, Ntandenyanga, Ilee, Mankaba, Ngeleku, Bosongo, Ntoto Nkomele, Nkundo and Bosando in 2022. More than 70% of women in all villages participate in this activity, selling cassava to villages beyond the project area. This program is proving successful on many fronts. By empowering women to be the main catalysts of agricultural productivity, the program brings direct household benefits while at the same time reducing pressure on the surrounding forests by targeting use of degraded land for sustainable production of locally cultivated crops. Plans are underway to expand the program to all villages in the project area.

Project reported accomplishments as of December 2022:

- 23 agricultural gardens/fields complete & 7 further planned
- Over 250 women from 18 OBs have been trained in agricultural production techniques

The Forest Plan Pillar



Sustainable Development Goals



New school constructions to expand quality education

The construction of schools in the communities also remains central to the project's theory of change. Bringing higher quality education to children will positively impact forest conservation efforts by improving the population's awareness of the forest's cultural and economic value and reducing the number of deforestation agents in the future. For construction, community members provide local materials (stones and sands) in all villages. To reduce the time it takes to transport these materials to construction sites the project has purchased pickup trucks in Kinshasa, in addition to two trucks already in Inongo.

The construction of new schools was completed in three villages during Q3-Q4 2023: Mpata Mbalu, Loombe and Nkondi. Additional school buildings have begun construction in Bosongo, Mbwe Nzey, Mpili, Bobola Mpinga, Ntuku and Ngando Manga - it is expected that doors, windows, and flooring will be completed in the first half of 2023. Delays occurred within Nselenge and Lokanga due to lack of construction material available to be transported to the area due to flooding conditions. However, these projects have resumed now the waters have retreated.

Project reported accomplishments as of December 2022: 18 schools completed, 4 in progress (walls being erected) and 3 at foundation level, and 8 planned

The Forest Plan Pillar



Sustainable Development Goal



Towards better healthcare in the project area

Improving the health and well-being of the communities in the project area remains a key focal area. The mortality for children under five years old is one of the highest in the world and maternal mortality is similarly among the highest anywhere. In the absence of local and national government support, the project is investing in building critical infrastructure and bringing the services needed to improve access to health and medical response systems.

Plastering, flooring, doors, and windows have been completed for the new clinic in Iballi. More recently, laboratory equipment has been purchased from the Abbot Lab and a lab technician has been hired and trained to deliver a wider training program to community members. A doctor has also been hired for Iballi and the Ministry of Health is very soon expected to appoint a second doctor as well as nurses for the clinic. Further work is needed in early 2023 now that the clinic has been upgraded to the secondary hospital level by the government. At the request of the Ministry of Health, a pharmacy was recently completed, while the construction of toilets is underway and housing for doctors and nurses now planned for the next construction stage.

Project reported accomplishments as of December 2022: 1 hospital complete, 1 in progress + 1 planned. 2 clinics planned

CHALLENGES



Increased illegal logging activities in parts of the project area posing challenges for biodiversity protection

Forest protection is essential to safeguarding the important ecosystem services in the project area, including habitats for globally threatened species such as Bonobos, Pangolins and Forest elephants. In December 2022, an increase in illegal logging for subsistence use was observed around the villages of Kesenge. Following complaints from local community members, the project team increased monitoring activities in the whole project area. Subsequently, a total of 33.8 kilometers of transects were deployed and monitored during Q3-Q4 2022 and 4 new cameras were installed in Ikula. Despite a spike in logging incidences, no reports of poaching have been brought to the attention during this reporting period. This is positive news alongside biodiversity assessments confirming that species such as Bonobos 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 both endangered species represents an improved connectivity of the landscape.

The Forest Plan Pillars



Sustainable Development Goal



Transportation from and to Kinshasa remains challenging

Project activities focusing on construction rely on undisrupted transport routes to bring materials to the project area. However, in Q3-Q4 2022, considerable challenges were faced that required a lot of creativity from the project team. Insecurity in the southern part of the Mai-Ndombe province, along with a deterioration of the road system from Kinshasa to Bandundu, significantly impacted the project team's ability to support the infrastructure activities through the provision of construction materials. To mitigate the increasing risk of hijacking, boats carrying supplies to the project area have had to go into Congo Brazzaville waters before crossing back into the DRC. Transportation was further challenged by the decision to stop using the Kinava flight due to poor maintenance of their planes. Important lessons have been learned during this period and the adaptive approaches taken to ensure continued delivery of results has been a rewarding experience for the project.

The Forest Plan Pillar



Sustainable Development Goals

