

# Congo Basin Pledge Report 2022

**December  
2023**



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## Opening Statement by Christophe Guilhou, Co-Facilitator for the Republic of France to the Congo Basin Forest Partnership



Dear readers,

It gives me great pleasure to open this second edition of the status report on financial commitments made in 2022 for the forests of the Congo Basin. This work is the result of a collective effort by the twelve donors of the Congo Basin Pledge. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the various donors for their cooperation and accountability.

The decision by France and Gabon to jointly take on the facilitation of the Partnership in 2023 is fully in line with this collective dynamic. As a central platform for dialogue on forests and the people who depend on them, bringing together all stakeholders, the Partnership has demonstrated in recent years that it is an essential forum for raising the issues of sustainability and management of forest ecosystems with stakeholders in the region and internationally.

This co-facilitation, which we hope will be as innovative in its form as in its content, is the symbol of the partnership renewal we wish to embody. Indeed, while this 2022 report demonstrates the importance of continuing to raise international awareness of the forests of Central Africa, it is clear that the major challenge for the long term will remain to mobilise all the stakeholders: the private sector, governments, local authorities, scientific networks, indigenous populations, local authorities and experts.

It is only by working together that we will achieve the objective set at COP 26 to halt deforestation, and that we will develop innovative financial approaches. This is also the purpose of the Country Partnerships for Forests, Nature and Climate, the first of which will be signed at COP 28.

The preservation of tropical forests, which are as vital in the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss as they are for the people who depend on them and the fundamental economic and social services they provide, must continue to be at the heart of our commitments. That's what this report is all about.

Enjoy your reading,

**Christophe Guilhou**

## Introduction

This is the second Annual Progress Report on the Congo Basin Pledge, following the first report published during COP27. This report provides an update on donor spending over the period from January to December 2022. This follows the first report published at COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, where Congo Basin Pledge donors<sup>1</sup> reported they had collectively provided a third of the [\\$1.5 billion pledged at COP26 in Glasgow](#).

## Methodology

The Congo Basin Pledge Report 2022 follows the same methodology as the [2021 report](#). To gain an understanding of contributions towards the Pledge, each participating donor provided their expenditures for the calendar year 2022 to the United Kingdom, as the co-chair of the CBFP Donor College. Countries submitted data, where available, on programmes, total funding amount (in original currencies), geography, thematic area, type of finance (grant, loan, equity, other), finance form (bilateral or multilateral), and whether private finance was leveraged. The 2022 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) exchange rate has been used to present the spending in USD, regardless of original currency. The expenditure contribution methodology used is aligned with OECD and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) financial reporting definitions.

At COP26, two other forest pledges were made in addition to the Congo Basin Pledge. [The Global Forest Finance Pledge \(GFFP\)](#) announced donors' intention to collectively provide \$12 billion in climate finance to forest-related programmes between 2021 and 2025. In parallel, 22 funders, including governments and private philanthropic organisations, announced a \$1.7 billion pledge in support of advancing [Indigenous Peoples' and Local Communities' \(IPLC\)](#) forest tenure rights in tropical forest countries, a recognition of the important role IPLCs play in protecting forests and nature.

All pledges are distinct but related, with a shared focus on conserving forests and recognising the importance of IPLCs as forest guardians. Where a donor has committed funds to the GFFP and either the IPLC or the Congo Basin Pledge, donor funding is counted under both pledges. A similar overlap also occurs between the IPLC Pledge and Congo Basin Pledge when a donor has committed funds to both.

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<sup>1</sup> Belgium, Bezos Earth Fund, European Union (EU), France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States of America.

## Pledge Spend Progress

Over the course of 2022, the second year of the pledge, the 12 donors have collectively provided US\$554,652,025 towards the Congo Basin Pledge, with US\$550,312,852 of that amount disbursed in the region. Taking into account donors' contributions in 2021, this means that US\$1,062,652,025 has been provided for the Pledge with US\$861,312,852 of that amount disbursed in the region since the Congo Basin Pledge was made at COP26.

<b>2022 contributions towards Congo Basin Pledge (US\$)</b>	
Total 2022 provided	\$554,652,025
Total 2022 disbursed	\$550,312,852
<b>Total contributions against Congo Basin Pledge (2021-2022) (US\$)</b>	
Total spend ( <i>percentage of \$1.5 billion Pledge total</i> )	\$1,062,652,025 (70%)
Total disbursed ( <i>percentage of \$1.5 billion Pledge total</i> )	\$861,312,852 (57%)

Many donors have worked through the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI), with donors disbursing US\$151,106,413 over the course of 2022. CAFI is a key partner for donors to deliver projects in the region (see *Case Study 9: CAFI support to community forestry across the Congo Basin region*).

## Case Studies

Donors decided to provide more illustrative examples of the direct benefits of Congo Basin spending. To that end, this year's report includes ten case studies that illustrate the programmes and projects Pledge donors are supporting.

### Case Study 1: Promoting gender equity and forest conservation through enhancing non-timber forest product value chains in the Ba'ka Project, Cameroon

The Djoum-Mintom landscape in southern Cameroon covers over 600,000 hectares of mainly dense rainforest and provides an important wildlife corridor within the tri-national Dja-Odzala-Minkébé (TRIDOM) protected area that also spans the Republic of Congo (ROC) and Gabon. Non-timber forest products (NTFPs), such as seeds, spices and fruits, are an essential source of income for communities residing in and around the region's forests, including the Ba'ka Indigenous People, also known as the pygmies. The most collected NTFPs include bush mango (ndo'o), moabi and djansang. Women are primarily responsible for engaging in most activities along the NTFP value chain, collecting and selling approximately 60% of the NTFPs. However, NTFP collectors face numerous challenges in effectively transporting, storing, processing and selling these products at fair prices.



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The UK's Partnership for Forests (P4F) programme has supported two project partners to strengthen both the supply and demand aspects of the NTFP market. The goal is to enhance the value chain and, in turn, improve the financial and social position of women and indigenous NTFPs. On the supply-side, APIFED – an NGO promoting women's and Indigenous Peoples' rights – would train and organise communities, particularly Indigenous People and women, around sustainable collection and processing of high-value NTFP commodities through cooperatives. On the demand-side, Ecotrading – an enterprise specialising in sustainable NTFP sourcing and trade

– would develop, improve and facilitate market access for both raw and processed NTFP commodities.

The activities took place in several communities located in Djoum and Mintom. APIFED has trained 285 people (61% women, 22% Ba'ka) to collect, conserve and process the NTFPs effectively and sustainably; supported the development and professionalisation of two community NTFP cooperatives, which serve as collection centres for NTFPs, providing storage and processing facilities, as well as act as intermediaries between collectors and buyers.

By the end of the 2022 NTFP season, the project had successfully sourced and commercialised 8.6 tonnes of NTFPs. The project worked to establish harmonised prices and to ensure reliable units of measurement. Ecotrading purchased the commodities at an average price of 1,200 CFA francs per kg throughout the campaign, a significant increase on the average 1000 CFA per kg offered by informal intermediary buyers. It meant by the start of 2023, over 40% of the collectors in Ecotrading's value chain were raised above the poverty line by their NTFP incomes.



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The Ba'ka NTFP collectors have still faced challenges in the collection of NTFPs due to its associated collection costs. To address this, the creation and structuring of cooperatives has sought to improve social dynamics between Ba'ka and other NTFP collectors through best prices. This has generated a great deal of enthusiasm among the Ba'ka people, especially women, who are currently preparing for the next campaign. With the infrastructure put in place and once the processing machines are installed, this will make a considerable contribution to boosting the development of the NTFP value chain by adding value to certain products, notably moabi and djansang. Already because of the involvement of women in the NTFP value chain activities, Ba'ka community members have seen the value of standing forests and set up a tree nursery with 5,000 saplings (mango, moabi, djansang and ebony).

*Funding: £169,928 (US\$209,529)*

## Case Study 2: Supporting the Tri-National de la Sangha Environmental Foundation (FTNS)

Under the "*Sustainable Forest Management in the Congo Basin*" programme, German Financial Cooperation (FC) grants implemented by KfW Development Bank in 2022 have contributed to the protection and more sustainable use of forest resources in the Congo Basin.

The programme has supported the "Tri-National de la Sangha" (TNS) protected zone, a transboundary area that covers parks in Cameroon, Central Africa Republic (CAR) and the ROC. The TNS was established in 2000 and is coordinated by the "Foundation TNS" (FTNS), though all three national parks maintain their own park management. The programme has focused on the Dzangha Sangha protected area (APDS) in the CAR, the Nouabalé Ndoki National Park (PNNN) in the ROC and the Lobéké National Park (PNL) in the Republic of Cameroon.

The project provides funds to support and finance urgently needed investment measures inside and in the neighborhood of the three national parks. These have included school and health infrastructure to improve the living conditions of local and indigenous communities (approximately 33,500 people). The project also seeks to reduce illegal use of the parks. One way the project is doing this is by developing the park's potential to provide alternative economic benefits, such as by improving tourism infrastructure in the parks. The project has enabled the rehabilitation of tourist watchtowers, airfield runway and aircraft hangar and constructed facilities such as an ecolodge and platforms for tourist beds. So far, the number of annual tourists has more than doubled since 2016.

In addition to supporting local communities, the project has also supported the management of the national parks and technical advisory services at the FTNS level. For example, it has supported a cross-border anti-poaching brigade that helps protect the parks' wildlife, including elephants and great apes.

*Funding: €17 million in direct grants and €55.6 million through an endowment fund since 2010.*



### Case Study 3: Supporting biodiversity conservation, sustainable forest management and integrated livelihoods in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) protected areas

In collaboration with the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN) and the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MEDD), Germany is supporting the sustainable long-term management of landscapes and livelihoods in six protected areas in the DRC. The six protected areas are the Kahuzi-Biega (PNKB), Lomami (PNL), Salonga (PNS), and Kundelungu (PNKL) National Parks, the Okapi Wildlife Reserve (RFO) and the Ngiri Triangle Natural Reserve (RNTN). The overall objective is to contribute to the protection of the biodiversity and the sustainable use of the tropical forests, as well as improving the economic situation and living conditions of the local population with a special focus on human rights.

The project has supported the implementation of measures to improve the management and monitoring of protected areas. This has been done by developing or updating management, business and operational plans and strategies, and then supporting their implementation. Whilst doing this, the project has considered the participation of the local population, equipment and infrastructure in the plans. The project also supports capacity building of the ICCN Directorate General to strengthen it in the areas of, for example, anti-poaching, biomonitoring, promotion of local populations and environmental, social and health and safety compliance.

In addition to supporting the management of the protected areas, the project also focuses on the conditions of people living in or around protected areas. This includes: road construction (with approximately 60km around PNL and RFO until mid-2023); construction or rehabilitation of small-scale infrastructure, with over 8,000 people to have access to clean drinking water between 2020 and mid-2023; promoting agricultural productivity, with the distribution of agricultural inputs to over 8,000 vulnerable families and 20,000 improved seeds between 2020 to mid-2023; and providing school fees and equipment for more than 3,000 children and students between 2020 and mid-2023.

Special attention is given to the protection of human rights in all supported protected areas. The approach includes a specific consultation framework – the “Bukavu Dialogue” – and supportive activities in PNBK. The “Bukavu Dialogue” involves stakeholders, such as ICCN, DRC government departments, local NGOs, traditional chiefs and local leaders, with a view to ensuring peaceful cohabitation in the PNKB protected area between local indigenous communities and the institutions protecting the park. It has supported priority activities such as land tenure security, construction of social infrastructure in riverside areas, income-generating activities for residents and schooling of pygmy children. A special human rights department has been established with the aim to initiate a top-down / bottom-up approach between the ICCN headquarter and protected areas to facilitate the human rights approach of ICCN and all its stakeholders.

*Funding: €100 million covering several complementary projects since 2019 (biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management, Phase IV – VIII; € 75 million and Integrated protection management, Phase I and II, € 25 million). Provided via KfW Development Bank.*

## Case Study 4: Strengthening the timber trade in Cameroon and the Republic of Congo (ROC)

Norway has been supporting efforts to enhance the legality of the timber trade from Cameroon and ROC to China and Vietnam through a series of collaborative efforts among law enforcement. The project includes efforts aimed at updating national legality frameworks, facilitating exchange visits for customs officers, co-creating Codes of Conduct for industry associations and engaging financial institutions on legal timber trade. This project is implemented by TRAFFIC, a non-governmental organisation working to ensure that trade in wild species, including timber, is legal and sustainable.

For a more sustainable impact, TRAFFIC worked to strengthen local communities' capacities by being part of the forest management discussion and supply of legal timber from legal sources in community forests. To do so, TRAFFIC has worked closely with a transnational network of traditional rulers, ReCTrad (Réseau des Chefs traditionnels d'Afrique pour la conservation de l'environnement, la gestion durable des écosystèmes et des forêts / Network of African Traditional Chiefs for Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Management of Ecosystems and Forests) and their communities.

To strengthen and sustain the project outputs, TRAFFIC is collaborating with environmental and forestry training institutions in Central Africa. A key partner is RIFFEAC (Réseau des Institutions de Formation Forestière et Environnementale de l'Afrique Centrale / Network of Forestry and Environmental Training Institutions of Central Africa), with which TRAFFIC is ensuring that capacity building modules for the various target stakeholders on the legality and traceability of forest resources are integrated into the curricula of these institutions to better equip future forest managers in Central African countries. TRAFFIC and RIFFEAC are currently working with three main schools and universities in this current project: the National School of Forestry (ENEF) and the University of Dschang in Cameroon, and the University of Marien Ngouabi in the Republic of the Congo.

Norway has sought to embed the results of the project with the relevant authorities through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) and Customs in Cameroon, and with the Ministry of Forestry Economy in the ROC. Negotiations in Cameroon over the course of 2022 culminated when MINFOF and TRAFFIC officially signed an MoU in July 2023, while another MoUs with ROC is still under development.

*Funding: TRAFFIC received 20 million NOK allocated for activities in Cameroon and RoC for the period 2021-2025, with approximately US\$445,000 spent on the project so far.*

## Case Study 5: Investing in the management of transhumance in eastern Central African Republic (CAR)

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is investing in strengthening the management of transhumance in the east of the CAR. Uncontrolled transhumance has risen in recent years due to increasing numbers of cattle in the area, coupled with the impacts of climate change, driving herders further south. This has led to degradation of grasslands, increasing conflict with local farmers, and threats to wildlife. Insecurity has exacerbated the conflicts, with little or no government control over the entire region.

African Parks manage the Chinko Conservation Area and the surrounding functional landscape under an agreement with the Government of CAR, covering nearly the entire watershed of the Chinko River, and totalling more than 60,000 square kilometers (km<sup>2</sup>). During 2022, aerial surveys over this landscape documented 42,000 head of cattle and 540 herder camps. By engaging with pastoralists as they move around the region, African Parks, with support from USAID, the EU,



*Data collection with a Sudanese herder by a Tango team in Nzacko Bac in May 2022. ©Marcus Westberg*

and other donors, have been able to encourage pastoralists to avoid the core area of the reserve, and an area of 26,000 km<sup>2</sup> is now protected. As part of a broader land use planning process, African Parks, working with local communities and authorities across eastern CAR, are setting up transhumance corridors and sustainable grazing areas, allowing for the separation of agriculture and transhumance. This planned use of land helps limit conflicts, while fostering connections to promote positive inter-community interactions, including the trade of meat and agricultural products.

African Parks has also been able to engage with authorities in Khartoum, along with local leaders in South Darfur, paving the way to further raise awareness among herders who come close to Chinko Conservation Area every year. Such engagement not only benefits the wildlife and habitats of the reserve, but also has the potential to reduce conflict between pastoralists and farmers. Moreover, this can help achieve greater impact by generating significant carbon credits through improved rangeland management and reduced deforestation. More than 3,000,000 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent of net emission reductions have been verified according to the Verified Carbon Standard and the Climate, Community, and Biodiversity Standard since 2016, which will generate benefits for both the conservation area and the local communities.

*Funding: Not available at the time of publication.*

## Case Study 6: Advancing Key Biodiversity Areas in the Congo Basin

The Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) Partnership was launched by some of the world's leading conservation organisations to identify, map, monitor and conserve sites of particular importance for biodiversity. It is supporting the global target to protect 30% of the planet by 2030 (known as '30x30') included in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which was agreed at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at COP15 (December 2022).

The Bezos Earth Fund has been working with the KBA Partnership to accelerate 30x30 in the Congo Basin, through the creation of new protected areas and improved management of existing ones, doing so in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and local community groups.

The project is seeking to secure KBAs within national land use planning and National Biodiversity Strategies & Action Plans (NBSAPs) in the region. A key deliverable so far has been the publication of comprehensive guidance on how KBAs can support NBSAP delivery; these include explanations of the targets, action points and case studies. An explainer for Governments on what KBAs are and how they can help Governments prioritize conservation efforts has been published in French for the Congo Basin region.

The project is providing ongoing support to the National Coordination Groups (NCG) established in DRC, Gabon and ROC. So far it has provided training, capacity building and support to each NCG, enabling them to identify and monitor KBAs, as well as to empower them to insert KBA indicators within land use planning processes and contribute to the implementation of NBSAPs.

As per one of the KBA Partnership's objectives, a specific area of focus includes mapping biodiversity hotspots in the Congo Basin. This map would serve as an input to the broader maps developed by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre of United Nations Environment Program, which give a baseline of protected areas against which progress can be monitored.

*Funding: Total grant disbursed from 2021 to date: US\$110 million in grants disbursed since 2021 to 12 Grantees- and 24 Subgrantees across ROC, DRC and Gabon.*

## Case Study 7: Integrated REDD+ programme in Kwilu province (PIREDD Kwilu)

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is implementing the Project for Operationalization of the National Forest Resources Monitoring System and REDD+ Pilot with a five-year plan from April 2019 to April 2024. The project targets two outcomes: the first is strengthening the operational capacity of the National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS); and secondly, the implementation of the REDD+ project in Kwilu province seeks the avoidance of deforestation through the promotion of agroforestry, whilst also improving the living conditions of local communities. JICA has been entrusted with about US\$4 million for the Integrated REDD+ program in Kwilu province (PIREDD Kwilu), which is co-financed with CAFI and REDD+ National Fund (FONAREDD).

For sustainable forest management, it is important to increase the autonomy of local communities in managing and using forest resources, and to balance conservation of the natural environment with sustainable local development. PIREDD Kwilu has supported activities in some 250 villages to protect existing forests in cooperation with local communities through agroforestry, which involves afforestation with agricultural activities such as the plantation of acacia, fruit trees, and indigenous tree species combined with agroforestry.

Agroforestry has been implemented on 3,960 hectares, or about 80% of the 5,000 hectares to be targeted over a four-year period from April 2019 to June 2023. Additionally, approximately 25,000 hectares of forest have been identified for conservation through the Project by preparing simple land use plans.

In the mid-term evaluation, conducted in December 2022 by a joint group of relevant organizations, the project received high overall ratings according to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation 6 criteria particularly for its approach to respecting local communities' ownership and its safeguarding efforts, including the establishment and operation of a grievance redress mechanism. Based on these results, about US\$5 million in additional CAFI funding was confirmed for the project. The funds will be used to further expand the target area coverage, increase the area of agroforestry, and strengthen forest conservation activities until June 2025.

*Funding: US\$17 million jointly by CAFI (US\$9 million) and JICA (US\$8 million)*



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## Case Study 8: Anchoring sustainable forest management and conservation at the heart of national land use planning in the Republic of Congo (ROC)

Over the course of 2022, the French Development Agency (Agence Française de Développement (AFD)), CAFI and the EU have appraised two programmes that place the preservation of the invaluable natural capital of Congolese forest ecosystems at the heart of ROC's national land-use planning decision-making process. They also recognise the importance of the dependent populations in the responsible and equitable management of natural resources. These two programmes, outlined below, will provide a framework for inter-ministerial dialogue and dialogue with stakeholders, with a view to concerted national planning of rural land.

*Sustainable Land Use Programme (Le Programme d'utilisation durable des terres, PUDT)*: Involving technical partners with a long history in the sustainable management of natural resources in the ROC<sup>2</sup>, the institutional component of the programme framework, supported by the PUDT, is being implemented by the ROC's Ministry of Land Management, Infrastructure and Road Maintenance, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Ministry of the Environment, Sustainable Development and the Congo Basin, and Ministry of Forest Economy over a 5-year period (2022-2027). The aim of the programme is to support the ROC government's efforts to structure its national land-use planning approach by drawing up a national rural land development and planning scheme for 2025 and an associated national land-use plan. Two pilot departmental plans for the Pool and Niari departments will also be produced. The strengthening of the institutional framework and the introduction of cross-sectoral instruments dedicated to land use planning should underpin the definition of an integrated development strategy, reconciling the objectives of socio-economic development and the sustainability of natural resources and ecosystems. The programme's social and environmental safeguards framework require the development of a national methodology for Free, Prior and Informed Consent, which will be deployed at the start of activities.

*KOPEKOBBA Programme for "Kolona Pe Kobatela" [Let's Cultivate and Protect in Lingala]*: The operational component, to be implemented by the ROC between 2023-2027, will support national priorities for land use planning. It will also help to finance and structure agriculture that respects the environment and improves the incomes of agricultural producers and agri-food businesses. It will carry out pilot investments designed to contribute to the diversification of the national economy and the sustainable development of rural areas. The programme also plans to support research and development, as well as the dissemination of agricultural practices that are resilient in the face of climate change, by supporting the local administration and private partners through the rehabilitation and development of their range of services. It includes the creation of innovation centres for sustainable agriculture and a network of relay farms. The programme will also contribute to the National Afforestation and Reforestation Programme (ProNAR) launched in 2011 by the Congolese authorities.

*Funding: US\$67.6 million jointly by CAFI (US\$35 million), AFD (US\$16.3 million) and the EU (US\$16.3 million).*

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<sup>2</sup> CIRAD (French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development), CIFOR (Center for International Forestry Research), HCV Network, WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society), WRI (World Resources Institute) and WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature)

## Case Study 9: Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) support to community forestry across the Congo Basin region

CAFI is a broad-ranging UN fund focused on the world's 2nd largest tropical rainforest and its 247.8 ( $\pm 3.65$ ) million ha of forest cover, with more than 50% classified as core, intact forests. CAFI has nine donors (Belgium, EU, France, Germany, Norway, South Korea, The Netherlands, United Kingdom and Sweden). Donor contributions are pooled and channelled to implementing organizations to promote joint action and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Progress on many CAFI-funded projects soared in 2022, pursuing CAFI's double objective to promote sustainable development and the protection of forests in six Central African countries that partner with CAFI – Cameroon, CAR, ROC, the DRC, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon – through its unique combination of high-level policy dialogue and direct investments on the ground.

An example of significant progress on programming in 2022 in the DRC was on community forestry. Strengthening forest communities' rights is an effective method of protecting forests and reducing poverty. In the DRC, a groundbreaking community forest law enables communities to secure and manage their traditional lands. The CAFI- DRC Letter of Intent includes an objective of granting at least 5 million hectares of local community forests concessions by 2031.

CAFI funds multiple province-wide projects (also known as PIREDDs) that support communities with securing areas for local community forest concessions amongst other objectives, such as supporting agroforestry and sustainable agricultural practices. By the end of 2022, CAFI has helped establish 361,045 hectares of community forestry concessions in the DRC.

The large jump in the areas of community forests with titles (195,621 hectares in 2022 alone) are mostly attributable to the efforts of two programmes: PIREDD Maniema (delivered by GiZ) and the Indigenous Peoples programme (delivered by the World Bank), that supported the establishment and titling of 83,861 hectares and 111,767 hectares, respectively, in 2022 alone.

## Case Study 10: Ecomakala reforestation project – maximising wellbeing through ecosystems resilience in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo

In 2022, Belgium has supported a programme implemented by WWF aimed at fostering local ownership of forest resources to generate income while preserving those natural resources.

In North Kivu, the programme has been deployed through the well-established 'Ecomakala' reforestation project. Ecomakala addresses illegal logging for charcoal production, a primary driver of deforestation in the DRC, to protect the forests of Virunga while supporting the people living in the surroundings of the park.

The project is based on the premise that socio-economic development of local communities and the improvement of their well-being depends on forests and their preservation. Farmers are therefore supported to plant trees in woodlots which provide an alternative and sustainable source of energy. Households are also offered improved cookstoves which require up to 50% less charcoal than traditional cookstoves.

The project supports communities in the development and implementation of "simple management plans" (plans simples de gestion) for community forest concessions. In addition, alternative sources of revenues are explored – such as through the development of beekeeping activities in reforested areas – next to the incomes from the sale of sustainable charcoal.

Despite the situation in North Kivu and the ongoing armed conflict, project activities contributed, in 2022, to strengthening local charcoal production cooperatives and supported more than 800 households through the provision of improved cooking stoves. The project also progressed towards securing the plantation of 100 ha of forest.

*Funding: €3 million EUR from 2022 to 2026, including €400,000 EUR in 2022*