



REDD+ Country Profile

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is located in Central Africa and has an area of 2.3 square kilometres, making it the second-largest country on the continent, after Algeria. The DRC is one of six countries that form the Congo Basin—one of the most important areas of biodiversity on earth and home to the second-largest tropical rainforest in the world.

The forests of DRC hold all three species of the African great apes (gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos), including Eastern gorillas and Eastern chimpanzees, and are the only home in the world to the rare bonobo. The DRC's great apes are threatened by habitat loss from mining and logging. The forest also holds the elusive okapi, found only in the DRC, the forest elephant and the mountain gorilla.

Great expanses of primary forest still exist in the Congo Basin—giving it its name of the Green Heart of Africa. The DRC contains 60 per cent of the forests of the Congo Basin and has approximately 1.5 million square kilometres of forest cover. With only 6 per cent of Congolese having access to electricity, 94 per cent of the DRC's 71 million inhabitants—nearly 67 million people—depend on the forest as an energy source for firewood and charcoal. Of these, the livelihoods of 40 million people depend directly on the forests: family subsistence farming, timber for homes and firewood, and charcoal for cooking and heating.

Even with a still relatively low deforestation rate of approximately 0.2 per cent annually, an estimated 350,000 hectares of loss per year over the period 2000–2010 places the DRC among the top ten countries in the world in terms of forest cover loss. The rates of deforestation will increase as mining, agriculture and biofuel production expand.¹ Reducing deforestation in the DRC could save 2.2 to 2.5 Gt CO₂e from 2012 to 2030. This deforestation is concentrated in “hotspots” located around the country's large cities, as well as in the densely populated areas on the edge of the expansive forest massif of the central basin. Direct causes of deforestation in the DRC vary: there is a strong interaction between logging, agriculture, fuel wood and bush fires. Household-scale slash-and-burn agriculture and exploitation of wood fuel (including charcoal) and timber appear to be the major drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in the country. Other indirect drivers of deforestation exist, including: lack of governance, lack of security and land tenure, land degradation, lack of viable alternatives, the need for infrastructural development, high informal exploitation of natural resources (80 per cent), low technical capacity, and population growth.

One-third of the population lives in urban areas. Ethnic tensions and inequitable access to land have rekindled violence in the east and northeast. An estimated 2 million people are internally displaced, and nearly 500,000 refugees have fled to other countries.² Human rights abuses are widespread in conflict areas, and minorities, including the Batwa and Bambuti, are vulnerable to attack.³

The DRC is a pioneer in REDD+. Since 2009 it has been positioning itself as a REDD+ leading actor—recognized on both national and international levels.

SNAPSHOT OF REDD+ PROGRESS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Governance

Setting the goals for REDD+, building the legal institutional arrangements to undertake it, and ensuring that all major REDD+ stakeholders can participate in its governance.

Goals

Has the country set ambitious and time-bound REDD+ goals and spelled out REDD+ guiding principles?

Accomplishments	In its national REDD Strategy, the DRC has set itself an ultimate REDD+ objective to <i>stabilize from 2030, and maintain thereafter, a canopy cover of 63.5 per cent of the national territory</i> , which will be fed into the national development strategy "Congo 2035." This objective is based on six components: (1) zero net deforestation by 2030, (2) 1.49 million square kilometres of forest cover stabilized by 2030, (3) average deforestation of 0.24 per cent between 2010 and 2030, (4) maintaining the functions of net carbon sinks, (5) prevention of cumulative emissions over 3 Gt Co ₂ , and (6) emissions reduction of 56 per cent against the baseline scenario. ⁴
Ongoing	Finalization of FCPF ER-PIN for a 12 million hectares subnational emission reduction programme in Mai-Ndombe province.
Planned	Preparation of investment phase: in 2013, deepen the policy dialogue at the national level and with the international community in order to define respective commitments.
Gaps/Next steps	Develop a roadmap with timelines, activities and responsible public actors to achieve REDD+ objectives by 2035.

Institutional arrangements

Are institutions in place to manage and coordinate REDD+ (e.g. inter-ministerial coordination, participation of all stakeholders secured)?

Accomplishments	The National REDD Committee, REDD Coordination (CN-REDD) and Inter-ministerial Committee are operational. National and local civil society can interact with CN-REDD through the REDD Working Group (GTCR), an NGO platform dedicated to REDD+. A formal accreditation and validation process for REDD+ projects in the DRC is adopted and a national REDD+ registry is established. The national registry for REDD+ projects serves as a database of all REDD+ finance activities, including those projects targeting carbon transactions in the voluntary market. DRC's National REDD+ Trust Fund was established in November 2012.
Ongoing	Operationalization of the National REDD+ Trust Fund and the registry.
Planned	(None, or no information at this time)
Gaps/Next steps	Information about forest issues is available only to those with Internet access. The GTCR insists on the reorganization of the REDD+ governance structures to ensure decentralization and meaningful levels of participation by civil society and forest peoples.

Legal

Does the country have a legal framework that supports the implementation of REDD+ (e.g. special focus on land rights/tenure rights, carbon rights assigned)?

Accomplishments	Launch of the National REDD Strategy at the UNFCCC COP18 in Doha.
Ongoing	A review of the Forest Code should be completed at the end of 2012. Revision of the national guidelines on free, prior and informed consent.
Planned	(None, or no information at this time)
Gaps/Next steps	Introduce legislation supporting REDD+. Revise land tenure laws and clarify ownership of existing carbon rights. No legislation relating to REDD+ exists. Land tenure is a potential source of conflict; donors must support the DRC's review of the Forest Code and land tenure laws. No law clarifying the ownership of carbon exists.

Tracking REDD+ Progress

Successful REDD+ implementation will depend on the country's ability to track and report on the state of the forests and REDD+ progress against a reference level.

MMRV

Advances in putting in place a measuring, monitoring, reporting and verification system for REDD+.

Accomplishments	The DRC launched a national system for forest monitoring in 2011. It has identified the two agencies that will manage MRV. It has purchased GIS/remote sensing equipment. The system has three major components: the forest cover tracking system, the national REDD+ registry and a third-party independent platform useful for validation and verification.
Ongoing	Capacity building of MRV of forest monitoring continues for DIAF and MECNT staff with the support of FAO, INPE, WWF, UMD, USFS, USAID and other supporting organizations.
Planned	The National Forest Inventory process is beginning. This will generate updated information on carbon stocks.
Gaps/Next steps	The DRC must establish a forest zoning plan via spatial planning and the identification of community forest use areas and customary forestlands. The territorial zoning process hasn't defined the distribution of land among protected, unprotected and buffer zone areas. This makes the linkage of forest carbon stocks and activity types for carbon estimates and management impact estimation difficult.

Reference levels

Has the country developed on national or subnational reference levels? What approach was adopted (e.g. historical, historical adjusted)?

Accomplishments	The DRC will develop its reference levels based on historic data, taking into account the country's development needs. The DRC has done some work, including the National Household Survey (2011), toward developing a national reference emissions level. The International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), in a workshop facilitated by CN-REDD, presented its REDD Policy Assessment Centre alongside other models ⁵ that could be used in the development of a reference scenario.
Ongoing	The country is currently working to develop both a national and subnational reference level in the future district of Mai-Ndombe.
Planned	The subnational reference emissions level should work as a learning experience for establishing a national reference emissions level.
Gaps/Next steps	Develop subnational and national reference levels that ensure additionality, that avoid displacement, leakage and double-counting, and that use historic data and provide incentives to conserve existing carbon stocks. ⁶

Getting REDD+ Done

Achieving REDD+ that is (a) undertaking intervention strategies that address the country drivers of deforestation and (b) mobilizing the financial resources to pay for it.

Addressing drivers of deforestation

What are the main strategies and programmes to reduce deforestation (e.g. increase protected areas, support shift to sustainable agricultural practices, increase law enforcement)?

Accomplishments	The DRC intends to expand its protected national territory from 10 per cent to 17 per cent. It has drafted a forest land-use planning guide. The DRC recently finalized a series of studies on the causes of deforestation and forest degradation. ⁷ The EcoMakala project aims to develop a new model of community reforestation, forest management and conservation.
Ongoing	The existing network of protected areas has been remodelled and expanded from 10 per cent to 17 per cent of the country between 2012 and 2020.
Planned	The REDD+ national plan lays out strategies to address the drivers of deforestation and degradation, covering the following areas: energy (wood-based), agriculture (zoning plan, sustainable agriculture), forest (improvement of legal logging framework), governance (registry, fund system, online information tools), development of national and provincial land-use plans, land tenure (reform land tenure, participatory mapping, capacity building), and demographics (improve understanding of demographic changes, education).
Gaps/Next steps	It's unclear how the responsibility for agriculture, the natural environment and forest will be shared between provincial and central authorities. ⁸ The DRC will likely tap into its hydroelectric potential and faces a dramatic expansion of palm oil plantations. ⁹ It must mitigate corruption to avoid undermining the REDD+ process.

Finance

What resources is the country counting on to pay for REDD+ implementation (e.g. multilateral, bilateral, own country resources, voluntary and offset carbon markets)? How much has been committed, transferred and disbursed?

Accomplishments	<p>The DRC has launched its REDD+ investment phase. The Voluntary REDD+ Database indicates the DRC has US\$181.75 million in funding, as reported by others. Multilateral funding includes UN-REDD, National Forest and Programme Funding (not specifically REDD+), Congo Basin Forest Fund (projects launched in 2012), Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (US\$800,000 disbursed), Forest Investment Program (Climate Investment Funds) and the Global Environment Facility. Bilateral funding arrangements have been secured with Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Spain, Sweden and the United States. It's not clear which resources have been committed, transferred or disbursed.</p> <p>DRC has signed an emissions reduction purchase agreement with the World Bank's BioCarbon Fund for the purchase of 500,000 certified emissions reductions to be generated by 2017.</p>
Ongoing	Finalization of ER-PIN for financing of 12-million-hectare ER-programme from FCPF Carbon Fund. Envisaged for time period 2014-2020 (approx. US\$60-70 million).
Planned	(None, or no information at this time)
Gaps/Next steps	Operationalization of the National REDD Trust Fund through signing of a first contribution agreement.

REDD+ for People and Nature

Ensuring that the country REDD+ strategy (a) has in place adequate safeguards to protect vulnerable social groups and preserve tropical forest environments and that (b) beyond doing no harm, they also offer new income and livelihood opportunities to indigenous peoples, local communities and the rural poor.

Social and environmental safeguard

What safeguards is the country applying to/implementing (FCPF, UN-REDD, REDD, SES)? Are there safeguard information systems in place?

Accomplishments	<p>A National Committee for Social and Environmental Risks and Benefits is operational. The DRC has finalized its Strategic Environmental and Social Impact Assessment in November 2012. A set of safeguards is formulated and a normative safeguard framework has been developed, which is compatible with the UNFCCC Cancun Safeguards as well as other frameworks available (UN-REDD, FCPF, REDD+ SES). This framework will be modified according to the feedback of applicants.</p> <p>Preliminary studies on how to link carbon MRV to biodiversity safeguards have been carried out in the DRC and are being used for supporting the development of proxy approaches that would render biodiversity MRV more viable.</p>
Ongoing	The development of a Safeguard Information System that will be part of the National Registry.
Planned	(None, or no information at this time)
Gaps/Next steps	The institutional capacity for the monitoring and implementation of REDD+ safeguards is weak at all levels and across ministries. The Groupe d'Études Environnementales du Congo (GEEC) doesn't have the human or technical resources to carry out social and environmental assessments, but a new law under review by Parliament would create the National Environment Agency to replace the GEEC.

Benefit sharing

Is there a finance mechanism in place that secures fair distribution of benefits to indigenous peoples, local communities and the rural poor?

Accomplishments	<p>A national REDD+ trust fund has been established in November 2012, managed by UNDP. The fund has three funding windows with different MRV requirements: (1) capacity building, sectoral investments, enabling and integrated programmes, (2) payment for environmental services and (3) REDD+ projects.</p> <p>An options paper on national benefit sharing has been prepared by national consultants.</p>
Ongoing	<p>Development of the trust fund's operations manual.</p>
Planned	<p>(None, or no information at this time)</p>
Gaps/Next steps	<p>Communities living within or around project boundaries often do not have legally recognized land rights. The DRC requires more projects demonstrating benefit sharing.</p>

WWF (PLANNED) ACTIVITIES UNTIL 2015 & PARTNERS

WWF will be continuing its integrated REDD+ work in Mai-Ndombe province to build capacities and strengthen land rights and local governance through participatory micro-zoning and developing FPIC guidelines and benefit-sharing mechanisms. This project will feed into the development of a future emissions reduction programme of the whole Mai-Ndombe province (12 million hectares). There will also be the development of a national carbon map using Lidar technology.

WWF is also developing another project in the Luki Biosphere Reserve in the Mayombe Forest that will halt deforestation while ensuring that the locals have access to non-timber forest products.

WWF-Belgium has launched the Geographically Integrated EcoMakala REDD+ Pilot Project to protect forests by providing clean cook stoves and planting a buffer of fast-growing trees to discourage people from removing trees from the Virunga National Park.

100%
RECYCLED**OUR VISION**

WWF's global Forest and Climate Initiative is working to ensure that REDD+ significantly contributes to the conservation of tropical forest and thereby to the reduction of emissions from deforestation and degradation for the benefit of people and nature.

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END NOTES

1. Nelson, et al., 2012. The Forest Dialogue Field Dialogue on Free, Prior and Informed Consent. 21-25 May 2012, Bas Congo and Kinshasa, The Democratic Republic of Congo. Background Paper.
2. UNHCR. 2013. UNHCR country operations profile—Democratic Republic of the Congo. <http://bit.ly/11ZrAiD>. Accessed 16 March 2013.
3. UNHCR. State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2011—Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). <http://bit.ly/14JR6Jv>. Accessed 16 March 2013.
4. Website of Government of DRC. <http://bit.ly/10xgXfw>. Accessed 20 March 2013.
5. See national REDD+ Strategy, page 31: FACET, OSFAC, EU JRC, UCL, Millennium Institute.
6. E.g. through methods that combine payments based on historical R and payments based on other yardsticks. See also WWF Reference Levels and payments for REDD+ —Lessons from the recent Guyana-Norway Agreement, 2012: <http://bit.ly/12K8UoP>.
7. UN-REDD. <http://bit.ly/16gvYtR>.
8. Knight, et al., Report for Conservation Finance Alliance: National REDD Funding Framework and Achieving REDD+ readiness findings from consultation. Conservation Finance Alliance, PricewaterhouseCoopers. <http://bit.ly/17Y03Ch>.
9. Revised FCPF TAP Synthesis Review of R-PP of DRC. <http://bit.ly/11Zr4kB>

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To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.
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