

# Congo Basin Pledge Report 2023

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## Introduction

This is the third Annual Progress Report on the Congo Basin Pledge, providing an update on donor spending over the period from January to December 2023. This follows the previous reports published at COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh and COP28 in Dubai, where Congo Basin Pledge donors<sup>1</sup> reported what they had collectively provided since COP26 in Glasgow.

## Methodology

The Congo Basin Pledge Report 2023 follows the same methodology as previous reports. To gain an understanding of contributions towards the Pledge, each participating donor provided their expenditures for the calendar year 2023 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 2023 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.

Guidance is provided on how to account for forest-related activities, but it is up to the discretion of each donor to choose which programmes contribute to the commitment; Thus, country contributions are included as provided.

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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 2023, the third year of the pledge, the 12 donors have collectively spent US\$735,941,444 towards the Congo Basin Pledge. Taking donors' contributions in 2021 and 2022 into account, this means that US\$1,798,593,469 has been spent towards the Congo Basin Pledge since it was made at COP26.

<b>2023 contributions towards Congo Basin Pledge (US\$)</b>	
Total 2023 provided	\$735,941,444
<b>Total contributions against Congo Basin Pledge (2021-2023) (US\$)</b>	
Total contributions	\$1,798,593,469



*Elephants at Mount Cameroon © PSMNR*

## 2023 Case Studies

Progress towards meeting the \$1.5b commitment has progressed well since COP26 but making positive impact on the ground to conserve the region's forests and support the local communities that depend on them will determine the ultimate success of the Pledge. The case studies below illustrate examples of ways donors are contributing to the Congo Basin Pledge and supporting communities and the protection of the Congo Basin forests and peatlands. More information about some donors' contributions, beyond CAFI, can be found on the COMIFAC-OFAC website:

<https://www.observatoire-comifac.net/?lang=fr>

### Case Study 1: Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) overview

As part of their commitment to the Congo Basin Pledge, many donors have contributed to the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) as a key funding vehicle to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, reduce poverty and accelerate sustainable development in the Congo Basin region. Over the course of 2023, over \$95 million was deposited into the CAFI fund by donors.

2023 focussed on transforming the Glasgow Forest pledges, which include the Congo Basin Pledge, into approved projects to tackle deforestation and enhance sustainable development. In 2023, \$198 million in new project funding was approved from CAFI's fund, with \$19.9 million transferred. In the DRC, where CAFI's activity is most advanced, \$136 million was approved for projects, including \$55 million for subsistence agriculture, backed by domestic co-financing as part of the government's rural investment program across 145 territories.

### Tangible Impacts on the Ground in 2023

Some of the achievements seen in **DRC** by the end of 2023 have included the formalisation of 593,000 hectares of local community forest concessions, amounting to approximately 15% of the 4.1 million hectares of local community forest concessions that have gained formal titles in DRC so far. Also in the DRC, CAFI-funded rural investment programs improved food security by planting 34,913 hectares of food crops and establishing 22,321 hectares of perennial crops like cocoa and coffee. CAFI has continued to expand energy initiatives in DRC, with the distribution of 160,189 clean cooking solutions, such as improved cookstoves, Liquid Petroleum Gas stoves and briquettes. These clean cooking solutions, depending on the type of stove used, have both helped households save between 8-15% on energy costs and contributed to a reduction charcoal consumption, with a 7% reduction in Kinshasa, 3% in Goma and 4% in Bukavu. Reduced consumption has helped to offset 545,207 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Meanwhile in the **Republic of Congo**, the "Project to Strengthen the Sustainable Wood Energy Potential in the Republic of Congo" aims to establish 2,700 hectares of quick-start agroforestry plantations to produce sustainable charcoal in Brazzaville by the end of 2028. The project is anticipated to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by an estimated 830,230 tons, reduce pressure on natural forests, and improve livelihoods of the local population as well as. In 2023 the first 472 hectares of wood energy plantations



were established in Oniamva, Plateau Department, with 300 beneficiaries identified among the local population (45% of whom are women) to secure the right of access to land and receive agroforestry techniques training and regular support throughout the duration of the project.

In **Gabon**, the development of the Geographic Information System and soil analysis lab, which commenced in 2021, was completed in 2023. This allows for local analysis of soil samples collected during the land use planning process, which were previously sent abroad.



*Plantation, PIREDD Mongala, DRC © Sylvain Maire Leguistin for Enabel*

### **Other Developments in CAFI**

CAFI has been extending its activity across the region. In Cameroon, a \$60 million call for expressions of interest was launched as part of a three-phased approach to solidify CAFI's partnership with Cameroon. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister of the Central African Republic committed to integrating climate change mitigation into the country's National Development Plan for 2024-2029.

CAFI has initiated several projects to mobilise private sector investments. In 2023, the CAFI Executive Board approved a \$51 million partnership between CAFI and the &Green Fund to scale up commercial investment in deforestation-free Central African commodity supply chains. The investment fund &Green provides loans that might not normally be available to certain companies in developing regions, who in turn are committed to implementing standards that do not contribute to deforestation.

Also in 2023, CAFI launched a call for expressions of interest in the development of a Private Sector Facility to support the private sector in the region. \$100 million were allocated to the Private Sector Facility for project development grants to support early-stage projects, pilot new technologies and address investment risks and information gaps. By the end of the year, CAFI had received 13 qualifying expressions of interest, with co-financing reaching \$482.6 million. Just over \$334 million in funding was requested from CAFI in 2023, for a target pipeline of projects of roughly \$817 million, representing a significant 2.4 leverage ratio.

Over a quarter of the expressions of interest received to engage with the private sector focus on Payment for Environmental Services (PES). The current pipeline of projects over the next couple of years is slated to include at least \$150 million of PES for close to 80,000 direct beneficiaries and over 1 million indirect beneficiaries. These figures are likely to increase, with interest and pipeline ramping up in various countries.

In summary, 2023 has seen funding secured, on-the-ground impacts, and promising private sector engagement. These achievements highlight CAFI's pivotal role in advancing sustainable development and forest conservation in Central Africa, aligning with regional countries' priorities and global climate goals.

More information about CAFI's activities can be found in the 2023 CAFI Annual Report:

<https://www.cafi.org/what-we-do/annual-reports>

Case Study 2: Conserving Ecosystems and Promoting Sustainable Development in rural Cameroon

## **Background**

The southwest region of Cameroon is home to some of Africa's most biodiverse forests. However, this ecosystem is under severe threat from illegal activities such as logging, poaching, and the overexploitation of natural resources. To combat these threats, the Programme for Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (PSMNR) in the region is part of the broader German Development cooperation initiative, "Environmental Policy, Conservation, and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in Cameroon."

The project's overall objective is the conservation of ecosystems and the promotion of sustainable development in rural areas. It specifically aims to improve sustainable forest and wildlife management in the southwest region, benefiting local populations, particularly the poorest groups. Key measures include the collaborative management of several protected areas (Mount Cameroon, Korup, Bakossi, Takamanda, and Bayang Mbo), improvements in socio-economic infrastructure, and the promotion of income-generating initiatives for local communities.

The programme focuses on engaging the local population in conservation efforts, particularly through a co-management model that enhances the protection of these vital ecosystems while addressing local development needs. Cameroon's Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) is the lead executing agency.



## 2023 Outcomes

Phase V of the programme began in January 2023, building on the successes of previous phases, which have established collaborative management agreements between park authorities and local communities to increase local acceptance of protected areas. These agreements involve communities in both the management and monitoring of protected areas.

The programme has also helped improve the economic situation of local forest users by creating alternative income opportunities and expanding socio-economic infrastructure. Significant milestones in 2023 include:

- Ongoing landscape land-use planning, conflict resolution, and the development of management plans for protected areas and community forests.
- Official designation of Korup Rainforest as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in June 2023, achieved through the project's efforts.
- Issuance of a ministerial guideline on local population involvement in the management of protected areas, based on the project's successful co-management model.
- Conservation education initiatives increased environmental awareness among the local population, particularly the young generation.



*Vocational education programme for former poachers © Bianca Schlegel, KfW*

## Conclusion

The PSMNR Phase V is a critical programme for the conservation of southwest Cameroon's biodiversity and the sustainable development of its rural communities. Building on prior successes, it continues to strengthen co-management of protected areas, improve local livelihoods, and promote the sustainable use of natural resources despite the challenges posed by the region's fragile security situation. As it progresses, the programme is also exploring innovative financing solutions to secure its long-term sustainability.



## Case Study 3: Vocational Training for the Sustainable Management of the Congo Basin Forests

### Background

Conservation of the Congo Basin forests requires a workforce trained in sustainable management practices. To support this goal, the Network of Forestry and Environmental Training Institutions of Central Africa (*Réseau des Institutions de Formation Forestière et Environnementale de l'Afrique Centrale*, RIFFEAC), with backing from GIZ's regional support project for COMIFAC (ProCOMIFAC), has undertaken efforts to modernise, and improve the quality of technical and vocational training in RIFFEAC's member institutions.

### 2023 Outcomes

The vocational training initiatives supported by ProCOMIFAC, with a focus on the integration of digital technology, increased participation of women, improvements in infrastructure, have yielded significant benefits for the sustainable management of the Congo Basin forests.

Digitalisation in training has been a key component of the project. ProCOMIFAC supported the digitalisation of training within RIFFEAC member institutions, enabling technical and vocational courses to be offered online as e-learning. Sixty-two teachers were trained in e-learning methods and 16 online courses were developed and made available through a dedicated platform. RIFFEAC institutions now incorporate digital tools such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), blended learning, and other online resources into their curriculum, enriching the learning experience for students.

The project has sought to improve training facilities and infrastructure. To enhance learning conditions, various learning materials were provided to the Ecole de Faune de Garoua (EFG) and Regional Postgraduate School for Integrated Management and Planning of Tropical Forests and Territories (*École Régionale Postuniversitaire D'Aménagement et de gestion Intégrés des Forêts et Territoires Tropicaux*, ERAIFT), including camping gear and field vehicles. EFG also saw the construction of a computer room, while ERAIFT benefited from the building of a perimeter fence.

Training, especially for senior roles, and enhancing female participation has been another success. The project implemented a scholarship program to support senior executives in forestry and environmental management. Between 2018 and 2022, 216 scholarships were awarded to 109 students (including 18 women). Additionally, 216 professionals received short-term, in-service training, such as conservation officers and students from RIFFEAC institutions. Efforts were also made to include more women in vocational training, with 23% of the scholarship recipients being women. These efforts have had a positive impact on employability and staff quality. Fifty-seven students from EFG and ERAIFT, including 12 women, have secured employment in conservation and protected area management. Ongoing training and development have helped conservation officers improve their skills and gain promotions, which also contributes to better management of protected areas.

## **Conclusion**

Vocational training is seen as a critical tool to ensure the sustainable management of the region's forests while also addressing regional socio-economic needs, addressing poverty by strengthening the knowledge in local and indigenous communities. RIFFEAC is better positioned to meet the growing environmental and conservation challenges in Central Africa through the project's digitalisation, gender inclusivity, and infrastructure improvements. Collaborating with technical institutions, including the Congo-Cameroon Inter-State University of Sangmelima, remains essential to expand digitalisation within the project, increase female representation, integrate the environmental issues of artisanal mining into the training programmes of institutions and develop new and improve existing courses.