

# Congo Basin Programme | Community-led conservation and land rights

## SUMMARY

Congo Basin Programme supports Indigenous Peoples and local communities to protect one of the world's most critical ecosystems in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It focuses on securing land rights, strengthening locally led conservation, and building resilient livelihoods in a region under increasing pressure from extractive industries and conflict.

## OVERVIEW

The Congo Basin is home to the world's second largest rainforest and supports 90 million people, yet its ecosystems and communities are under increasing pressure from extractive industries and insecure land rights.

The programme works primarily in the Democratic Republic of Congo ("DRC") and Cameroon, supporting partners to secure land rights, resist destructive developments and implement locally led conservation. It combines funding with capacity building, long term partnerships and in country expertise to strengthen civil society and community leadership.

In 2025, partners operated in a highly complex environment, including renewed conflict in Eastern DRC. Support focused on maintaining continuity, including emergency funding and coordinated responses to ensure staff safety and ongoing delivery. Alongside this, the programme expanded its partner network and strengthened its capacity offer, including support for emerging African women leaders and increased in region coordination.



## OUTCOME

The programme is strengthening community control over land and natural resources, improving resilience and enabling more effective conservation. In 2025, this included significant progress in securing community forests, expanding sustainable livelihood approaches and supporting communities to manage their territories.

Partners are also delivering measurable ecological outcomes. In Cameroon, work led by the African Marine Conservation Organisation ("AMCO") to restore Lake Ossa reduced invasive plant coverage by 80% within three years, supporting the return of African manatees while improving conditions for local fisheries. Across the region, conservation approaches increasingly integrate scientific knowledge with local and cultural practices.

## IMPACT

With the support of Synchronicity Earth, the Congo Basin Programme has:

- Supported 21 partners across the region with over £1m in funding in 2025, with 95% receiving core support.
- Secured and mapped 439,401 hectares of community forest in the Congo Basin since 2017, including 131,434 hectares in 2025.
- Strengthened local leadership, 81% of partners are African organisations and 67% of partners receiving capacity-building support.
- Trained 11,587 people in sustainable livelihoods and conservation approaches.
- Enabled communities to secure and manage 76% of legally-recognised lands for Indigenous Peoples and local communities.
- Provided emergency and flexible support to partners operating in high-risk contexts, including conflict-affected areas in Eastern DRC.

## Sustainable development goals:



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