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# International Outlook for Privately Protected Areas

Country Profile: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

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## Introduction:

This country profile is part of a study by the International Land Conservation Network (ILCN) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) summarizing the **legal, policy, and institutional mechanisms used to establish and incentivize privately protected areas (PPAs) in 30 understudied countries.**

PPAs contribute to the achievement of global conservation goals and biodiversity targets by contributing to landscape-scale conservation, connectivity and ecological-representativeness of protected areas.

For the purposes of this profile, an area is considered a PPA if it conforms to the definition agreed upon by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Generally speaking, a PPA's protection must be recognized and durable (with long term conservation intent); it must be governed by a private or non-governmental entity; and it must be governed and managed to meet the general conservation standards of a protected area (PA) as laid out by the IUCN.<sup>1,2</sup> **Note: Alongside currently existing mechanisms in these countries, this study also references mechanisms that represent *potential opportunities for the creation of PPAs.***

The data in this profile is based on a 2018 desk review of law and policy documents, government reports, publications by multi-lateral organizations, scholarly literature, and other sources. For 28 of the 30 country profiles, data was reviewed by a volunteer in-country expert. We are grateful to these experts, whose names and the profiles they reviewed are listed in the appendix to the [International Outlook for Privately Protected Areas summary report](#).

Finally, this profile is intended to be a living document, which will be updated periodically as more information is submitted and time and resources allow. If you have a contribution, please contact the authors at [landconservation@lincolninst.edu](mailto:landconservation@lincolninst.edu).

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<sup>1</sup> Mitchell, B.A., Stolton, S., Bezaury-Creel, J., Bingham, H.C., Cumming, T.L., Dudley, N., Fitzsimons, J.A., Malleret-King, D., Redford, K.H. and Solano, P. (2018). *Guidelines for privately protected areas*. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 29. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xii + 100pp.

<sup>2</sup> Dudley, N. (ed.) (2008). *Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. x + 86pp. WITH Stolton, S., Shadie, P. and Dudley, N. (2013). *IUCN WCPA Best Practice Guidance on Recognising Protected Areas and Assigning Management Categories and Governance Types*, Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 21. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN

# DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (*République démocratique du Congo, DRC, or Congo-Kinshasa*)

## Outlook for Privately Protected Areas

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1. Dr. Jeminiwa Samuel, Chief Research Fellow, Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria

## I. Country Overview

### *Land Area*

The Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) total land area is 226,705,000 hectares (ha).<sup>3</sup> As of 2014, it was estimated that 26,200,000 ha (12 per cent) of the country's land was in agricultural use and another 152,889,400 ha (67 per cent) was under forest cover. This constitutes the second-largest contiguous forested area on the planet, following the Brazilian Amazon.<sup>4</sup> From 1990-2010, the average national deforestation rate hovered near 0.23-0.25 per cent annually.<sup>5</sup>

The DRC is home to 19 terrestrial ecoregions<sup>6</sup> and over 15,000 plant and animal species, 3,200 of which are endemic, making it the most biologically diverse country in Africa.<sup>7</sup>

### *Land Ownership and Tenure*

All rights to land, water, mineral, and forest resources in the DRC are formally held by the national government.<sup>8</sup> Land nationalization proceeded from Congolese Independence in 1960, was affirmed by the *Loi Foncière of 1973*, and has persisted, despite the challenges it poses.<sup>9</sup> Usufruct rights to land are assigned under a variety of legal frameworks, with official tenure policy often overlapping, or contradicted by, customary rights of use.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2014. "DRC." Accessed June 2017. <http://www.fao.org/countryprofiles/index/en/?iso3=COD>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Aquino, André and Bruno Guay. 2013. Implementing REDD+ in the Democratic Republic of Congo: An analysis of the emerging national REDD+ governance structure. *Forest Policy and Economics* 36: 71-79. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2013.04.003>.

<sup>6</sup> République Démocratique du Congo, Ministère de l'Environnement, Conservation de la Nature et Développement Durable. 2016. "Stratégie et plan d'action nationaux de la biodiversité (2016-2020)." P. 20. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/cd/cd-nbsap-v3-fr.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> World Wide Fund for Nature. n.d. "WF in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)." Accessed November 2018. [http://www.wwf-congobasin.org/where\\_we\\_work/democratic\\_republic\\_of\\_congo/](http://www.wwf-congobasin.org/where_we_work/democratic_republic_of_congo/).

<sup>8</sup>United States Agency for International Development. 2016. "Democratic Republic of the Congo—Property Rights and Resource Governance Profile". Accessed June 2017. <https://www.land-links.org/country-profile/democratic-republic-congo/>.

<sup>9</sup> Long, Cath. 2011. "Land rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo – A new model of rights for forest-dependent communities?" In *Land Struggles and Civil Society in Southern Africa*, eds. Kirk Helliker and Tendai Murisa. Africa World Press.

<sup>10</sup> Adams, Martin and Robin Palmer. 2007. Independent Review of Land Issues: Eastern and Southern Africa. Vol. 3. P. 9-10. [http://www.sarpn.org/documents/d0002625/Land\\_review\\_SA\\_Jun2007.pdf](http://www.sarpn.org/documents/d0002625/Land_review_SA_Jun2007.pdf).

Commercial resource exploitation is managed by concessions of two types: *concessions in perpetuity* are made by the state to Congolese nationals only; *standard concessions* are made by the state to any legal entity, and generally last for 25 years, with the opportunity for renewal.<sup>11</sup> Undocumented and ambiguous use rights predominate among agricultural smallholders, artisanal loggers and miners, and the estimated 40 per cent of the rural population who rely on the forest for subsistence.<sup>12</sup> These rights are generally allocated to groups, rather than to individuals, by traditional leaders.<sup>13</sup>

The DRC was embroiled in a many-sided military conflict between 1998 and 2003, resulting in population displacement which has exacerbated conflict over land and forest access. Millions of internally displaced persons and refugees reside in the DRC, many of whom have been forced to encroach on the customary rights of other groups.<sup>14</sup> Land relations are most strained in the eastern DRC, where armed conflict continues and where as many as three-quarters of displaced peoples are located.<sup>15</sup> Violence has stunted the DRC's infrastructure for commercial resource exploitation, such that DRC's gross forestry exports are less than those of its smaller neighbors, Gabon and Cameroon.<sup>16</sup> As conflict has slowed in the west, logging and mining operations have picked up pace.

### *Protected Areas in the DRC*

Protected areas in the DRC are managed by the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN, *Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature*), created by Ordinance No. 75-023 of 1975 and governed by Law No. 78-002 of 1978.<sup>17</sup> The ICCN is jointly supervised by the *Ministère de l'Environnement Conservation de la Nature, Eaux et Forêts* and the *Ministère du Portefeuille*. The ICCN works very closely with communities and partners to conserve and manage the protected area network and its biodiversity.

According to the DRC's most recent National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP, 2016), the Congolese protected areas network covers 31,213,900 ha, or 13.3 per cent, of the national territory.<sup>18, 19</sup> It is made of up nine national parks,<sup>20</sup> 57 reserves and hunting areas, three biosphere reserves, 117 forest reserves, and three botanical gardens.

The ICCN manages national parks (*parc national*), areas that are protected from human activity; nature reserves (*réserve naturelle*), areas that are mostly protected; hunting areas (*domaine de chasse*), where

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<sup>11</sup> United States Agency for International Development, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> United States Agency for International Development, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Mataboro, Séverin Mugangu. 2008. "La Crise foncière à l'est de la RDC." In *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs – Annuaire 2007-2008*, eds. Stegaan Marysse, Filip Reyntjens, and Stf Vendegiste. p. 385-414. Paris: L'Harmattan.

<sup>16</sup> Debroux, L., T. Hart, D. Kaimowitz, A. Karsenty, and G. Topa (Eds.). 2007. *Forests in Post-Conflict Democratic Republic of Congo: Analysis of a Priority Agenda*. A joint report by teams of the World Bank, Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Centre International de Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD), African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), Conseil National des ONG de Développement du Congo (CNOGD), Conservation International (CI), Groupe de Travail Forêts (GTF), Ligue Nationale des Pygmées du Congo (LINAPYCO), Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), Réseau des Partenaires pour l'Environnement au Congo (REPEC), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Woods Hole Research Center (WHRC), World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). xxii, 82p. ISBN 979-24-4665-6. <https://www.cifor.org/library/2188/>.

<sup>17</sup> l'Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN). n.d. "PARCS NATIONAUX." Accessed November 2018. <http://www.iccnrdc.org/parcs.html>.

<sup>18</sup> République Démocratique du Congo, Ministère de l'Environnement, Conservation de la Nature et Développement Durable, 2016. P. 19

<sup>19</sup> The World Database on Protected Areas shows 32,429,000 ha of land – about 13.8 per cent of the Country – protected. Differences between statistics may be due to differences in methodologies or out of date reporting.

<sup>20</sup> l'Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN). n.d. "PRESENTATION DE L'ICCN." Accessed November 2018. <http://www.iccnrdc.org/>.

hunting of game species is allowed; and botanical gardens (*jardin*), landscaped gardens.<sup>21</sup> The ICCN's stated goal is to protect 15 per cent of the total land area of the country.

Existing protected areas in the DRC focus on the protection of high-profile species and timber; however, this aim is challenged by unauthorized hunting, logging, and collection of non-timber forest products, as well as limited resources for management and enforcement.<sup>22,23</sup>

## II. Law and Policy for Private Land Conservation

### *Privately Protected Areas*

Given state ownership of land in the DRC, the country does not have a formal definition for privately protected areas (PPAs), nor are such areas included in the national system of protected areas. Despite this, private entities play an important role in conservation in the DRC.

### *Conservation Concessions*

The *Forest Code of 2002* provides for a strategy for private conservation action in the context of state ownership through conservation concessions (CCs; *cession de conservation* or *cession forestière de conservation*).<sup>24</sup> CCs are more thoroughly defined in *Decree No. 011/27 of 20 May 2011, Fixing specific rules for the Allocation of Forestry Conservation Concessions*,<sup>25</sup> and by *Law no. 14/003 of February 11, 2014, Concerning the Conservation of Nature*.<sup>26</sup> The progress of CCs on the ground has been one of cautious success, as described in the case studies in Section V below.

According to the IUCN's *Guidelines for Privately Protected Areas* (2018), "PPAs can be established on leased land, provided these are intended to be long-term and renewable."<sup>27</sup> Therefore, depending on the terms of the contract, it is possible that conservation concessions in the DRC may one day be recognized as PPAs.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Inogwabini, B., O. Ilambu, & M. Gbanzi. 2005. "Protected Areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo." *Conservation Biology*, 19(1). 17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1523-1739.2005.00181.x>.

<sup>23</sup> République Démocratique du Congo, Ministère de l'Environnement, Conservation de la Nature et Développement Durable, 2016. P. 40.

<sup>24</sup> Democratic Republic of the Congo. 2002. Law no. 011/2002 of 29 August 2002, Portant Code Forestier, outlining a renewed code for forest management. <http://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20economique/Code%20Forestier/rdc-loiforets.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Democratic Republic of the Congo. 2011. Decree 011/27 of 20 May 2011, Fixant les règles spécifiques d'attribution des concessions forestières de conservation" [Setting the specific rules for the attribution of forestry conservation concessions]. <http://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20economique/Code%20Forestier/D.011.27.50.05.2011.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> Democratic Republic of the Congo. 2014. Law no. 14/003 of February 2014. Relative à la Conservation de la Nature [Regarding the conservation of nature]. Outlining plans and priorities for land and resource conservation in the DRC. <http://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20administratif/Environnement/Loi14003.11.02.2014.htm>.

See Article 2 (pp.3) on the *conservation concession*, so defined as a "contract between the public administration, called the grantor, and a private person or local community, called the concessionaire, by which the grantor confers on the concessionaire during a determined period the [right to] exploitation and management to a forest, fauna, or land resource with the aim of conserving biological diversity." [author's transl.]

<sup>27</sup> Mitchell, B.A., S. Stolton, J. Bezaury-Creel, H.C. Bingham, T.L. Cumming, N. Dudley, J.A. Fitzsimons, D. Malleret-King, K.H. Redford, and P. Solano. 2018. Guidelines for privately protected areas. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 29. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xii + 100pp.

### *Privately-managed Parks*

Publicly protected areas may also be privately managed. Article 24 of *Law 14/003 of 2014* allows “the state, the province, or the decentralized territorial entity, each within the limits of its powers to partially or totally confer the management of a protected area for a period not longer than 25 years renewable.”<sup>28</sup> Article 38 requires that such public-private partnerships include in their management strategy a plan for the socio-economic development of neighboring communities.<sup>29</sup> The combined area of the DRC’s two privately-managed parks (Garamba and Virunga) is 1,270,617 ha.<sup>30</sup>

In such instances of shared governance, the entity with decision-making power determines whether the area meets the requirements of a PPA as stated in the IUCN’s definition.<sup>31</sup>

### *National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)*

The DRC’s most recent NBSAP (2016), submitted to the Convention on Biological Diversity for 2016-2020, includes a call to “promote the creation of forest conservation concessions” as part of their objective to create a network of protected areas that conserve 17 per cent of the national territory.<sup>32</sup> It also sets forth a goal to increase eco-tourism in the protected areas network to help support their management.<sup>33</sup>

### **III. Financial Incentives for Privately Protected Areas**

There is no known tax incentive subsidizing the creation of conservation concessions. Rather, conservation concessionaires—like those engaged in extractive industries—are required to contribute to government funds for protected area management.<sup>34</sup> However, laws passed in 2002, 2006, and 2008 assign contradictory taxation laws to forest concessionaires, differing on the percentage of revenue to be paid to local, provincial, and national entities.<sup>35</sup>

### *UN-REDD+*

One way in which funding obstacles for conservation have been overcome is through the United Nations Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) program, which has been active in the DRC since 2010.<sup>36</sup> REDD+ programs in the DRC focus on stewardship of forests by indigenous communities through the coordination of community forests (*forêts communautaires*) and conservation

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<sup>28</sup> Democratic Republic of the Congo. 2014. Loi no. 14/003 du 11 fevrier 2014 Relative á la Conservation de la Nature. <http://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20administratif/Environnement/Loi14003.11.02.2014.htm>.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> UNEP-WCMC, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Mitchell, et al., 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Republique Democratique du Congo, Ministere de l’Environnement, Conservation de la Nature et Developpement Durable, 2016. P. 73. Author’s translation.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>34</sup> See Article 68, Law 14/003 of Feb 11 2014, Relative á la Conservation de la Nature: “Sous réserve des droits et devoirs leur reconnus par la législation en vigueur, les personnes physiques ou morales détentrices des concessions de conservation ou de bioprospection sont assujetties à une contribution au fonds fiduciaire pour les aires protégées dans les conditions définies par arrêté interministériel des ministres ayant la conservation de la nature et les finances dans leurs attributions.”

<sup>35</sup> Aquino and Guay, 2013.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 2.

concessions.<sup>37</sup> These projects are financed through the sale of carbon credits, as well as through other budgeting mechanisms of the United Nations, which supports REDD and REDD+ projects internationally. At present, eight REDD+ projects are active in the DRC, amounting 2,429,603 ha of forest area conserved (see the case study in Section V below).<sup>38</sup>

#### IV. Organizations for Private Land Conservation

##### *Government*

- The Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN) is the major government partner for conservation activities, including the management of national parks.<sup>39</sup>
- The Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) was formed in 2005 to coordinate sustainable forest management between governments region-wide. COMIFAC is also a leader in REDD+ implementation for the Congo forest.<sup>40</sup>
- The DRC's Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism (MECNT) supports environmental actions nation-wide and provides institutional capacity to support the protected areas network.

##### *Non-governmental*

- The Bonobo Conservation Initiative has taken a leading role in advancing conservation concessions in the country (see case study in Section V below).
- Conservation International, through their Conservation Stewards Program and other efforts, have made strides in remunerating communities for conservation activities.<sup>41</sup>
- African Parks (AP) is a non-profit organization, currently managing 10 national parks by contract in Central and East Africa, including Garamba National Park in the DRC, making AP the largest protected area management NGO in Africa.<sup>42</sup>
- The UK-based Virunga Foundation manages Virunga National Park under a contract with the ICCN (see case study in Section V below).<sup>43</sup>
- The World Wide Fund for Nature has been working in the DRC since the 1980s and is partnering with the ICCN to establish a network of protected areas representative of the rich biodiversity of the country.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Cuny, Pascal. 2011. "Etat des lieux de la foresterie communautaire et communale au Cameroun." Tropenbos International Programme du bassin du Congo. Wageningen, Pays-Bas. [www.tropenbos.org/file.php/547/etatsdeslieux-28-12-2011.pdf](http://www.tropenbos.org/file.php/547/etatsdeslieux-28-12-2011.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> Ministère de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable, Ministère des Mines, Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature, Coordination Nationale REDD. 2015. "Atlas Forestier de la République Démocratique du Congo." Accessed June 2017. <http://cod.forest-atlas.org/map/>.

<sup>39</sup> See their website: <http://www.iccnrdc.org/>.

<sup>40</sup> See their website: <http://www.comifac.org/>.

See also Law no. 09/005 of 31 December 2009, "Autorisant la ratification du traité relatif à la conservation et à la gestion durable des écosystèmes forestiers d'Afrique centrale et instituant la Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale (COMIFAC)" [Authorizing the ratification of the treaty for the conservation and sustainable management of forested ecosystems in of Central Africa and Instituting the Central African Forest Commission]. <http://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC109830/>

<sup>41</sup> Conservation International. 2017. "Conservation Stewards Program." Accessed June 2017. [http://www.conservation.org/projects/pages/conservation-stewards-program.aspx?\\_ga=2.2966649.834948895.1497460566-2094736543.1496777174](http://www.conservation.org/projects/pages/conservation-stewards-program.aspx?_ga=2.2966649.834948895.1497460566-2094736543.1496777174).

<sup>42</sup> See their website: <https://www.african-parks.org/>.

<sup>43</sup> See their website: <https://virunga.org/about>.

<sup>44</sup> See their website: [http://www.wwf-congobasin.org/where\\_we\\_work/democratic\\_republic\\_of\\_congo/](http://www.wwf-congobasin.org/where_we_work/democratic_republic_of_congo/).

## V. Case Studies

### *Conservation Concessions by the Bonobo Conservation Initiative*

The Bonobo Conservation Initiative (BCI) manages three neighboring conservation concessions of forest areas in the Équateur province of central DRC, with a total area of 603,470 ha.<sup>45</sup> The previous concessionaires were logging companies. Under BCI's management, the newly protected areas contribute to a larger network of community forest concessions and community-managed nature reserves, including the Sankuru Nature Reserve, stretching along the southern edge of the Congo River. The forest is a crucial habitat for the endangered bonobo (*Pan paniscus*).

Working under the *Forest Code of 2002* and supporting legislation, and in cooperation with Conservation International and the ICCN, BCI is pioneering the conservation concession model in the DRC. BCI derives revenue from their activities through the REDD+ carbon credits program. They have also found allies in the local Mongandu indigenous communities, whose respect for the bonobos aligns with that of BCI.<sup>46</sup>

### *Private Management in Virunga National Park*

Virunga National Park (*Parc National de Virunga*) is regarded as the oldest national park in Africa—founded in 1925 under Belgian colonial rule, and recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1978—as well as the most threatened.<sup>47</sup> Virunga covers 776,893 ha along the DRC's eastern edge, abutting the borders of Uganda and Rwanda.<sup>48</sup> Ongoing conflict in the region has precipitated a humanitarian crisis, forcing refugees to encroach on the parks boundaries and compounding the pressures of poaching and deforestation, which threaten protected areas throughout the region. At least 150 Virunga park rangers have been killed by poachers and militias in the last decade.<sup>49</sup>

Today, the Park is run cooperatively by the ICCN and the UK-registered non-profit Virunga Foundation (VF), which holds the management contract for the park.<sup>50</sup> This public-private partnership was established in 2005 and is contracted to run through 2021, as allowed by *Law 14/003 of 2014*.

VF management has been crucial to park security and conservation efforts. The Foundation participated in the effort to prevent oil exploration by SOCO International within the Park, which culminated in their being barred from drilling in 2014.<sup>51</sup> VF is presently engaged in pushing out the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), which runs an illegal charcoal operation on the park's southern edge. VF has also spearheaded sustainable development in surrounding communities, installing hydroelectric systems

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<sup>45</sup> Bonobo Conservation Initiative. n.d. "Peace Forest Map". Accessed June 2017. <http://www.bonobo.org/peace-forest-map/>.

<sup>46</sup> Ziegler, Christian. 2013. "Bonobos Find Peace In Congo Forest Sanctuary." *National Geographic Voices*, April 18, 2013. <http://voices.nationalgeographic.com/2013/04/18/bonobos-find-peace-in-congo-forest-sanctuary>.

<sup>47</sup> Kalikat, Yves. 2014. "La Fondation Virunga Belgique voit le Jour sous la Bénédiction de Didier Reynders." *Le PotentielOnline*. [http://www.lepotentielonline.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=12449:la-fondation-virunga-belgique-voit-le-jour-sous-la-benediction-de-didier-reynders&catid=90&Itemid=472](http://www.lepotentielonline.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12449:la-fondation-virunga-belgique-voit-le-jour-sous-la-benediction-de-didier-reynders&catid=90&Itemid=472).

<sup>48</sup> WCMC-UNEP. 2017. "Virunga National Park." Accessed June 2017. <http://www.wdpa.org/virunga-national-park>.

<sup>49</sup> Vidal, John. 2016. "On the Frontline of Africa's Wildlife Wars." *The Guardian*, May 7, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/may/07/africa-frontline-of-wildlife-wars>.

<sup>50</sup> Virunga Foundation. n.d. "About." Accessed November 2018. <https://virunga.org/about>.

<sup>51</sup> Dranginis, Holly. 2016. Mafia in the Park: A charcoal syndicate is threatening Virunga, Africa's oldest national park. P. 6. [http://www.enoughproject.org/files/report\\_MafiaInThePark\\_Dranginis\\_Enough\\_June2016.pdf](http://www.enoughproject.org/files/report_MafiaInThePark_Dranginis_Enough_June2016.pdf).



and power grids, and coordinating fisheries and agro-industry. In December 2016, VF, the DRC, and the EU signed a Euro 53 million grant for the advancement of conservation and sustainable development.<sup>52</sup>

### *Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project*

In 2010, the Canadian company Ecosystem Restoration Associates (ERA) partnered with the United States-based NGO Wildlife Works Carbon LLC (WWC) on the first REDD+ project in the DRC. They successfully converted two former logging concessions along the western shore of Lake Mai Ndombe to conservation concessions, thereby conserving 299,645 ha of land.<sup>53</sup> The concessions encompass a range of habitat types, including upland forests, swamp forests, savannah, and inundated grassland. In 2013, WWC achieved REDD+ verification for Mai Ndombe, bought ERA out of the project, and successfully marketed the first of its carbon offsets to firms internationally.<sup>54</sup>

The Mai Ndombe project seeks to balance conservation with development. WWC has provided agricultural extension services and helped to organize local development councils. Their contracts also require that they build at least 19 schools, two of which were completed in 2015.<sup>55</sup> WWC has also developed a Safeguard Information System to help local communities to monitor deforestation and other encroachments across the landscape.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>de Dixmude, Arnold Jacques. 2016. "A New € 53-million grant has been signed between the EU, the DRC government, and the Virunga Foundation, on Monday 28 November 2016." *capacity4Dev.eu*, December 5, 2016. <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/b4life/blog/new-%E2%82%AC-53-million-grant-has-been-signed-between-eu-drc-government-and-virunga-foundation-monday>.

<sup>53</sup> Wildlife Works LLC and ERA Ecosystem Restoration Associates Inc. 2012. Mai Ndombe REDD+, Project Design Document For Validation Under the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standard, Second Edition. <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=2ahUKEwiD4pvRuPPeAhXhc98KHd4lCeYQFIAAegQICRAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.vcsprojectdatabase.org%2Fservices%2FpublicViewServices%2FdownloadDocumentById%2F28770&usg=AOvVaw1xUIGV5RhV5xBXymRscelS>

<sup>54</sup> Offsetters Climate Solutions Inc. 2013. "Wildlife Works Carbon LLC Acquires Offsetters Interest in Joint Venture Mai Ndombe REDD+ Project." MarketWired, October 31, 2013. <http://www.marketwired.com/press-release/wildlife-works-carbon-llc-acquires-offsetters-interest-joint-venture-mai-ndombe-redd-tsx-venture-coo-1847048.htm>.

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