



THE CONGO BASIN AT A GLANCE

OVERVIEW

The Congo Basin is one of the world's great natural systems. Stretching across Central Africa, it includes vast tropical forests, rivers, wetlands, peatlands and savannas that together form an interconnected landscape. At its heart lies the Congo River—the second-longest river in Africa and the second largest in the world by discharge.

More than a geographical region, the Congo Basin is home to extraordinary biodiversity and millions of people whose lives and livelihoods are closely linked to healthy ecosystems. These landscapes provide food, freshwater, energy, cultural values and economic opportunities, while helping regulate the global climate through the carbon stored in their forests and peatlands.

Protecting the Congo Basin is therefore not only a regional priority—it is a global one. Visuals.

A shared landscape across Central Africa

The core tropical rainforest spans six countries, while regional cooperation extends across eleven COMIFAC member states.

Country List:

Angola
Burundi
Cameroon
Central African Republic
Chad
Democratic Republic of Congo
Republic of Congo
Equatorial Guinea
Gabon
Rwanda
São Tomé and Príncipe



Map source :Congo Basin science Initiative

THE CONGO BASIN

Quick facts

Around
2,40 million ha
of tropical rainforest

10,000+ plant species

3.68 million km²

Area drained by the Congo River and its tributaries.

80+ million people

Depending on forest resources

Iconic wildlife

Including forest elephants, gorillas, bonobos, chimpanzees and okapi

29 billion tonnes

Carbon stored in the Central Congo peatlands

Did You Know?

The Congo River transports more water than any river globally, with the exception of the Amazon, and it sustains one of Earth's most extensive freshwater systems.

A LANDSCAPE WITH GLOBAL IMPORTANCE

For climate

The forests and peatlands of the Congo Basin store vast amounts of carbon and help regulate regional and global climate. Protecting these ecosystems contributes to climate mitigation while supporting resilience to changing environmental conditions.

For biodiversity

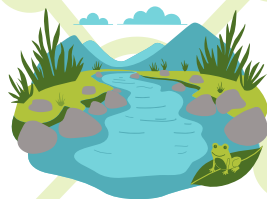
Millions of people—including Indigenous Peoples and local communities—depend on healthy forests and rivers for their livelihoods, food security, health and cultural identity.

For water

The Congo River and its network of tributaries sustain freshwater ecosystems, fisheries, agriculture, transport and hydropower across Central Africa.

For people

The Basin is one of the richest places on Earth for wildlife and plant diversity. Many of its species are found nowhere else, making conservation essential for global biodiversity.



A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Balancing conservation and development

The Congo Basin is changing. Population growth, expanding agriculture, infrastructure development, mining and climate change are placing increasing pressure on forests and natural resources. At the same time, countries across the region are working to improve livelihoods, strengthen economies and conserve biodiversity.

Challenges

- Forest loss
- Climate change
- Unsustainable land use
- Wildlife crime
- Resource extraction

Integrated solutions

- Sustainable land management
- Forest restoration
- Community stewardship
- Scientific research
- Regional cooperation
- Nature-positive investment

Meeting these interconnected challenges requires integrated approaches that consider landscapes as a whole—bringing together governments, communities, scientists, conservation organizations and the private sector to balance environmental, social and economic priorities.



WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE FUTURE

A shared responsibility

The future of the Congo Basin depends on collaboration. Protecting its forests and biodiversity while supporting sustainable development requires coordinated action across countries, sectors and communities.

The Congo Basin Landscapes Initiative (CBLI) supports this vision by promoting integrated landscape management, strengthening partnerships, generating knowledge and sharing practical solutions that help people and nature thrive together.

As pressures on the Basin continue to evolve, collaboration, innovation and evidence-based decision-making will be essential to safeguarding this globally important landscape for future generations.

Data in this publication are compiled from UNEP, the Congo Basin Science Initiative, COMIFAC, the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, WWF, FAO and peer-reviewed scientific literature. Statistics represent the most widely accepted estimates available at the time of publication.

ABOUT THE CONGO BASIN LANDSCAPES INITIATIVE (CBLI)

This UNEP-led multi-partner and multi-country initiative includes the GEF-funded Congo Forest Integrated Programme (CFIP) and the IKI-funded Congo Basin Peatlands project.

The GEF-funded CFIP, being delivered under the UNEP-Led multi-country and multi-partner CBLI, comprises of two flagship initiatives, including the GEF-7 aCongo Basin Impact program (2021-2026) and the GEF-8 Congo Critical Forest Biome Integrated Programme (2025-2032).

The CBLI collaborates with governments and partners to protect the Congo Basin rainforest and peatlands by implementing transformative landscape approaches in partnership with local communities, forest-dependent individuals, and the private sector, ensuring benefits for all stakeholders.



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