Democratic Republic of Congo



Organization: Pilier aux Femmes Vulnérables Actives (PIFEVA)
Location: Mwenga, South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo
Solution: Nature-based solution restoring biodiversity by planting edible caterpillar trees in community forests affected by problems of deforestation in the Democratic Republic of Congo
Factsheet Period: First round of UNDP AFCIA funding (18 months); Second round of UNDP AFCIA funding (12 months)



Planting trees that host edible caterpillars to combat deforestation in Bukavu, DRC @PIFEVA

The Democratic Republic of Congo is home to the Congo Basin, which holds about 10% of the world's biodiversity (Convention on Biological Diversity). However, the country faces significant threats to its rich ecosystems due to deforestation, losing roughly 500,000 hectares of forest annually (Global Forest Watch). PIFEVA is working to enhance the resilience of Indigenous women and young people by restoring biodiversity, planting edible caterpillar trees in deforested community forests. The solution introduces innovative edible caterpillar farming and the establishment of an Indigenous cooperative for their sale, providing a sustainable source of income and food security for the community.

Key achievements

- 220 ha of forest restored
- 103 kg of tree seedlings distributed and 88,000 trees planted.
- 385 Indigenous youth and 385 women engaged in sustainable forest management
- Local Committee for the Fight Against Deforestation established, ceasing ember production activities in targeted forests
- 22 Indigenous Forest Monitoring Committees established, involving 88 nursery workers and 770 Indigenous people
- Established 22 nurseries (0.132 ha) of fast-growing, edible caterpillar host tree species, managed by trained youth and Indigenous women

Social impact

- Inclusion of women and youth in sustainable forest management practices
- Engagement of Indigenous communities in decision-making processes for their forests
- Improvement of socio-economic conditions for Indigenous women and youth, supporting their livelihoods through the sale of edible caterpillars







Adaptation benefits

- Promotes sustainable forest management using Mwenga's Indigenous practices to control deforestation
- Improves climate resilience through carbon sequestration and biodiversity restoration of forests
- Alleviates food insecurity as caterpillars from planted trees are edible and highly nutritious

Replication potential

- The model can be scaled to other regions, both locally and globally, with Indigenous people playing an important role in safeguarding our natural environments

Innovation

- Introduced edible caterpillar farming and established an Indigenous cooperative for the sale of the caterpillars
- Mobilized youth and Indigenous women in sustainable forest management, changing behaviour towards deforestation for future generations
- Recognized and incorporated Indigenous knowledge systems as legitimate strategies for protecting biodiversity

Funding snapshot

- UNDP-AFCIA grant: US$205,000 (initial grant: $125,000; scaling grant: $80,000)

Investability	
Revenue per year	US$13,200 annually from edible caterpillar initiative.
Sustaining criteria	Formed a cooperative with young people and Indigenous women to sustain the edible caterpillar initiative. Through training in business management and sustainable harvesting, they have built a strong value chain linking pickers, wholesalers and retailers. Caterpillars are now sold in local markets for about $3 per kilogram, with distributor partnerships helping to grow the cooperative and create lasting income opportunities.
Financial innovation	In Mwenga, Indigenous youth and women are earning income by selling local products, helping to improve their social and economic conditions.
Expected return	Of the total income collected by the cooperative, 60% is reinvested to increase working capital and support business growth, 10% is allocated to cover operating expenses and 30% is periodically distributed among the beneficiaries who are members of the cooperative, providing them with direct financial returns.

ADAPTATION FUND Climate Innovation Accelerator

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To read their story, visit UNDP-AFCIA
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