

March 2026

2025 Update: Conserving community forests for Grauer's gorilla and other threatened species in the DRC

Field partner: Strong Roots



We wanted to thank you again for your support for this project and let you know what was accomplished in 2025.

A reminder that in this project we are empowering local communities and indigenous peoples to manage and protect their traditional lands. This is shoring up a ~6,000-km² biological corridor connecting two national parks: Kahuzi-Biega and Itombwe in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Our partner Strong Roots has worked to establish officially designated Forestry Concessions for Local Communities (CFCLs).

Here are the 2025 highlights:

- ◆ In 2025, eastern DRC was beset by unusual instability and insecurity with the invasion of the Rwanda-backed **rebel group of M23**. Much of the area where Strong Roots operates was not affected, although toward the end of 2025, advances by M23 rebels led to relocation of Strong Roots personnel, who were able to return to Bukavu in mid-December.
- ◆ The **first phase of the project** consisted of securing 25 CFCLs (601,438 ha), of which 23 CFCLs (561,578 ha) have been granted titles of legal recognition and two CFCLs (39,860ha) are still awaiting their titles. Their documentation processes were closed shortly before the M23 rebels took over the town of Bukavu, which delayed granting of their titles by the provincial authority.
- ◆ Over the year, **training on community forestry** was carried out with 3,762 community members (local authorities, guardians of customs, local leaders and other community members) including 889 women and 149 indigenous Batwa.
- ◆ The project assisted the development of the **management plans for CFCLs** as well as the overarching Corridor Management and Conservation Plan.
- ◆ Support to **smallholder farmers** included the provision of improved seeds and training in agroecology techniques, forest governance and management.

Looking forward

Other funders are supporting the second phase of the developing CFCLs, which involves securing additional 400,000 ha. Biome is supporting the implementation of sustainable management of the CFCLs that Biome helped establish. This is an evolving process that is done differently depending on whether the CFCL is located in a mining-intensive or agriculture-intensive area.

Thank you for your support for this project! Please let us know if you have questions or would like to discuss this project or receive further information.

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Map: Competed forest concessions (pale pea green), adjacent national parks (dark green) and other community forests.

