

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

A PRIMER ON DEFORESTATION FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND FAITH COMMUNITIES

The Congo Basin is home to the second largest rainforest in the world. About 60 percent of this forest lies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is the second largest tropical forested country in the world and has the greatest extent of tropical rainforests in Africa, covering more than 90 million hectares. Forest cover in the Democratic Republic of the Congo stores 7 percent of the world's forest carbon—making it one of the largest forest carbon stocks in the world. Forty million people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo rely on the forest for food and fuel.



DRC'S FORESTS ARE A SACRED TRUST

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a forest-rich nation in a forestrich region. Central Africa's Congo Basin, an expanse that hosts the second largest tropical rainforest in the world, spans ten countries, including the DRC. Almost two-thirds of the Basin's forests—and ten percent of the world's tropical rainforests—lie within the DRC.^{2,5,6} More than half of the country is blessed with forest cover,⁷ which includes peat-swamp forests, mountain forests and mangroves.⁸ DRC's extensive forests are home to extraordinary biodiversity, some of which is found nowhere else on Earth.⁶ In fact DRC is among only 17 countries worldwide considered to be "megadiverse," a term used to refer to the world's top biodiversity-rich countries, particularly those with many species that are found nowhere else (endemic species).^{9,10} Home to forest elephants, the okapi (a relative of the giraffe that is unique to DRC) and over 1,000 bird species, DRC's forests also host more primates than any other country, including three species of Great Apes: gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos.^{5,8,11}

DRC's forests also provide essential goods and ecosystem services to communities at local, national and global levels.^{12–16} About 60 million people depend directly on the Congo Basin's forests for their livelihoods,¹⁷ and the

forests have provided crucial safe harbour to people fleeing the violence and conflict that have plagued the country for almost 30 years. Forests are an important source of food for DRC's communities,¹³ and almost the entire population relies on medicinal plants from forests.¹² Fuelwood, artisanal timber extraction and non-timber forest products contribute to rural communities as well as the national economy.¹⁴ In 2006, the timber industry contributed 2 percent of the country's GDP,¹⁷ while sustainable use of tropical forests is a core part of the government's Poverty Reduction Strategy.¹³

The DRC's significant peat-swamp forest—known as the Cuvette Centrale forms part of the world's largest peatland, which is a type of wetland that is among the most valuable ecosystems for storing carbon.¹⁸ Peat-swamp forests across the Congo Basin store almost one third of all the carbon in tropical peatlands, making them crucial repositories in the fight against climate change.¹⁵ In 2017, the DRC and the neighbouring Republic of Congo agreed to preserve and co-manage this wetland; it is now the largest bi-national Ramsar Site—a wetland recognized for its importance under the Ramsar Convention.¹⁹

DRC forests host more primates than any other country on the planet, including three species of Great Apes: gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos.



Deforestation rates within the DRC, even if moderate compared to other tropical forest countries such as Brazil or Indonesia, are the highest anywhere in the Congo Basin and are increasing.²⁰⁻²² Political instability and conflict have precipitated a severe humanitarian crisis and undermined the full potential of DRC's forests to support the livelihoods and development needs of the country's people.²³⁻²⁶ These forests are under increasing pressure from chronic poverty; economic collapse and underdevelopment; widespread hunger (more than 13 million people in the DNC faced food insecurity in 2018²⁷); internal displacement of over 4.5 million people; and illegal trade of natural resources, which funds conflict in several areas of the country.

Small-holder agriculture and charcoal production account for 90 percent of DRC's forest destruction. LOSS AREA (KM²)





FIGURE 1. DRC TREE LOSS, 2001 TO 2018

Source: Global Forest Watch, Open Data Portal, 2019



At least three phenomena are driving deforestation in the DRC.

AGRICULTURE AND CHARCOAL PRODUCTION: Currently, the main drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in DRC are smallholder agriculture, charcoal production, fuelwood collection, logging, and mining, with agriculture and charcoal production accounting for over 90 percent of all forest disturbance. DRC's forest clearing rates are highly correlated with population growth, as almost two-thirds of the population live in rural areas and produce almost half of their own food. Meanwhile, charcoal production continues to grow to meet the demand of major cities like Kinshasa.²⁸ With DRC's population estimated to reach 197 million people by 2050 and 379 million by 2100,²⁹ more sustainable alternatives to shifting cultivation (in which an area of ground is cleared of vegetation and cultivated for a few years before moving to a new plot) and to charcoal production are urgently needed in national policies.

ILLEGAL LOGGING: Illegal logging is the second most important driver of deforestation in DRC.³⁰ It is mainly powered by small-scale logging for domestic and regional markets, and has played a critical role in funding the current conflict.²⁰ Logging volumes doubled between 2008 and 2014, and the harvest was eight times greater than the amount of logging officially sanctioned by the government.²⁰ Loopholes generated by gaps in legislation, flawed enforcement, lack of transparency and insufficient resources for forest monitoring provide fertile ground for illegal activity and deforestation at all scales.²⁰

CONFLICT: War can be enormously destructive to rainforests, especially when absence of the rule of law enables illegal exploitation and trade of forest resources.²⁵ Unfortunately, a range of natural resources have played a key role in DRC's conflicts, with minerals, timber, charcoal, ivory, and fisheries all implicated in financing, sustaining, and perpetuating conflict,³¹ bringing serious harm to the forests where these resources are found. Simultaneously, displacement of people from their homes by conflict has put further pressure on DRC's forests as those people turn to the forest as a source of food and fuel. In particular, DRC's four main protected areas and World Heritage Sites (Virunga, Garamba, Kahuzi-Biega and Okapi) in the east of the country have been used as refuges by displaced people, and all have seen dramatic increases in encroachment and wildlife poaching as a result.³¹

War is enormously destructive to rainforests, with lawlessness providing an easy path to illegal forest exploitation.



PROTECTING DRC'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND FOREST COMMUNITI

Between 600,000 and 2 million people self-identify as indigenous in DRC, representing 1-3 percent of the population.³ They belong primarily to three groups: the Mbuti, in the east of the country; the Bacwa, who inhabit the forests and savannas around Kasai lakes; and Western and Eastern Batwa peoples, who live along the border with Rwanda and around Lake Tumba in Equateur province.³²

Traditionally, DRC's indigenous peoples have led nomadic lifestyles, but they are becoming increasingly sedentary.³³ The indigenous peoples of DRC, through their traditional knowledge of the forest, are skilled at using and managing it in a sustainable manner.³³ The forest environment is interwoven into indigenous cultures. Indigenous peoples rely on forest resources for hunting, gathering

and fishing, and for treating their sick using the medicinal plants that forests provide.³² Their knowledge of the forests and their adaptations to it are precious resources that deserve respect and protection. However, indigenous peoples face serious threats, with land rights representing a key challenge.³² Lacking secure land rights, indigenous people are losing access to forests and often face conflict with farmers of the Bantu majority.³³ Insecure land rights also contribute to the poverty that many indigenous peoples in DRC face, as increasing pressure on their ancestral lands forces them into extreme deprivation.³²

Although DRC's constitution "recognizes citizenship for all born in its territory as well as to the ethnic groups whose members and territories

form the DRC" and "prohibits discrimination on the basis of membership of a certain race, ethnicity, tribe, cultural or linguistic minority," the government does not consistently recognize indigenous peoples.³⁴ In general, the country's native peoples experience significantly worse living conditions than the general population, and poor access to services such as health and education.³²

Nevertheless, at the international level, DRC has ratified several agreements protecting indigenous and forest peoples,³⁵ including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Climate change-related programs are also helping to increase the profile of indigenous peoples. For example, DRC's National REDD+ Investment Plan, adopted by the government in December 2015,³⁶ has the objective of managing forests sustainably, with indigenous peoples playing a central role.³⁷

DRC's Forest Code, introduced in 2002, includes several clauses that could be valuable for indigenous peoples. The law introduced the concept of local community forests, and in 2014 a decree was finally signed to introduce a mechanism for granting forest concessions to local communities. However, many civil society organisations view the law with scepticism, seeing it as a way for the government to bypass the forest concessions moratorium, which was imposed by the government in 2002, banning the allocation of concessions until sufficient control was gained over the forestry sector.³⁸ Nevertheless, in 2018, a plan was announced for a five-year "experimental phase" to gradually give communities access to roughly 70 million hectares of forest through community management permits.³⁹

CONSERVING THE ITOMBWE FOREST⁴⁰⁻⁴⁴

In 2006, DRC's Minister of Environment declared the creation of a nature reserve in the Itombwe Massif—a block of forest in eastern DRC at the northern end of Lake Tanganyika known for its high levels of biodiversity, including many species found nowhere else in the world. The decision to declare the reserve was motivated by the severe threats it faced, especially from armed groups controlling the region.

The document establishing the Itombwe Nature Reserve included scant information on the new nature reserve's boundaries,⁵¹ and was issued without consulting or even informing local communities who traditionally resided in and relied on the natural resources from within the area. These communities protested their being banned from the forests and, with support from the local NGO Africapacity, requested that the decision be reversed.

The history of protected areas in the region and their impacts on indigenous communities did little to inspire the support of the local communities. In the 1970s, almost 6,000 indigenous people were expelled from their homes within the Kahuzi-Biega National Park, only 200 km away from Itombwe. The Mbuti people of Itombwe were well aware of the consequences of that expulsion for the local indigenous people.



Having been banned from their traditional villages within the protected area, and having lost access to their traditional lands and livelihoods, these people now live in extremely precarious conditions and are forced to work as manual labourers.

In 2008, the World Conservation Society initiated a discussion with NGOs working in the area (including Africapacity, Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature, WWF, Rainforest Foundation UK and Rainforest Foundation Norway) on the way forward. This dialogue led to a participatory process in which traditional leaders from the Massif worked with the NGO partners to demarcate boundaries for the nature reserve. A conflictsensitive conservation approach helped to overcome the tensions between the conservation goals and the local communities' traditional ways of life. In the process, it became clear that all stakeholders shared the goal of protecting the Itombwe reserve from external threats, and the Mbuti—the main indigenous group in the area— worked together with conservationists to explore ways to jointly protect the Itombwe forest. Mapping of community resource use helped to establish the boundary of the reserve and identify distinct zones for settlements, agriculture, hunting, gathering of nontimber forest products, and conservation. As a result, the use rights of communities were largely protected, and in June 2016, the Mbuti celebrated the government's official recognition of these new boundaries.



FIGURE 2. FOREST COVER AND INDIGENOUS LAND AREA IN DRC

Source: Garnett, S.T., Burgess, N.D., Fa, J.E., Fernández-Llamazares, Á., Molnár, Z., Robinson, C.J., Watson, J.E.M., Zander, K.K., Austin, B., Brondizio, E.S. et al. 2018. A spatial overview of the global importance of Indigenous lands for conservation. Nature Sustainability, 1(7): 369–374. Hansen, M. C., P. V. Potapov, R. Moore, M. Hancher, S. A. Turubanova, A. Tyukavina, D. Thau, S. V. Stehman, S. J. Goetz, T. R. Loveland, A. Kommareddy, A. Egorov, L. Chini, C. O. Justice, and J. R. G. Townshend. 2013. "High-Resolution Global Maps of 21st-Century Forest Cover Change." Science 342 (15 November): 850–53. Data available on-line from: http://earthenginepartners.appspot.com/science-2013-global-forest.

The boundaries and names shown and the designation used on maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by UN Environment or contributory organisations.

KEY COMMITMENTS AND INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

Under the Paris Agreement, DRC committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions 17 percent below business-as-usual by 2030, with almost one-third of those emission reductions coming from the forest sector, and a further 43 percent coming from the agriculture sector.⁴⁵ Specific objectives identified within those sectors include reducing deforestation and forest degradation, enhancing forest carbon stocks, reducing slash-and-burn agriculture, and developing intensive agriculture and agribusiness (which would reduce pressure on forests). To reduce emissions from the energy sector, large-scale afforestation is proposed to meet communities' fuelwood needs while reducing pressure on primary forests.⁴⁶ In 2014, DRC also endorsed the New York Declaration on Forests, committing to do its part to at least halve the rate of loss of natural forests globally by 2020 and strive to end natural forest loss by 2030. This was reinforced by DRC's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, which also committed the nation to reducing deforestation by 2020. In addition, under the Bonn Challenge, DRC committed to restoring 8 million hectares of degraded forest lands by 2020.⁴⁷

BILATERAL COOPERATION AND REDD+

REDD+ is an international climate mitigation strategy with the goal of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in tropical forest countries, while providing sustainable development benefits to participating communities. It does this, in part, by providing financial incentives for sustainably managing or conserving forests, and halting or reversing forest loss.

In 2012, DRC adopted its National REDD+ Framework Strategy, aiming to stabilize forest cover in the country at 63.⁵ percent of its national territory by 2030 and to maintain it thereafter.⁴⁸ A REDD+ Investment Plan stemming directly from this Strategy was adopted by the government in 2015 and outlines DRC's approach to implementing REDD+. This Plan formed the basis for a 2016 partnership between DRC and the Central African Forests Initiative (CAFI), the largest international collaboration to protect the Congo Basin's forests. It is a partnership of six Central African countries (DRC, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and the Central African Republic), five donor countries (UK, France, Germany, EU and Norway), and the United Nations and World Bank.

The agreement signed between CAFI and the DRC in 2016 included the prospect of financial support of up to USD 200 million for the period 2016-2020.⁴⁹ To date, DRC's National REDD+ Fund has issued 15 calls for proposals for projects to be funded through the partnership, and eight programs of work are already being implemented.⁵⁰ DRC is one of two African countries that will receive REDD+ payments—up to USD 55 million in DRC's case—for forest protection under the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). The country has worked with the World Bank since 2010 to develop the Mai-Ndombe Emissions Reduction Program as a source of REDD+ payments.⁵¹

NATIONAL PARKS

DRC has long been invested in national parks and was the first country in Africa to create a national park—the Virunga National Park for mountain gorillas, established in 1925. Virunga National Park is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is recognized as Africa's most biologically diverse protected area.⁵⁰ As of 2016, DRC had 79 protected areas covering 11 percent of the country,⁵² and 15 million hectares of designated protection forests.⁵³

Despite its leadership in designated protected areas, DRC's national parks face ongoing threats. More than 180 rangers have been killed in Virunga over the last 20 years, making the park one of the most dangerous conservation projects in the world. Violence in Virunga National Park in May 2018 forced the Park to close to tourists for a number of months, a decision with devastating impacts on the local tourism economy.^{54,55}

Between May and September 2018, Global Forest Watch detected 500 hectares of tree cover loss within Virunga National Park, primarily driven by charcoal production.⁵⁶ Also in 2018, reports emerged that the Government of DRC assigned oil prospecting concessions in Virunga and Salonga National Parks.^{57,58}

LOGGING MORATORIUM

In 2002, a logging moratorium was introduced in DRC to prevent a dash for resources following the country's civil war. Despite the moratorium, illegal logging and animal poaching continued.⁵⁹ The moratorium remains in effect, although in 2018 the Environment Ministry announced its intention to circumvent the moratorium and grant 650,000 hectares of concessions to two Chinese-owned companies, threatening to open the country's forests to largescale logging.^{60–63} In response, more than 50 conservation and human rights organizations called on international donors to halt forest conservation-related funding to the DRC.^{61,63}

DRC's National REDD+ Strategy aims to stabilize forest cover in the country at 63.5 percent of its national territory by 2030.



Religious believers and spiritual communities have a unique role to play in protecting DRC's rainforests and supporting its indigenous peoples. The ethical case for caring for the planet is deeply rooted in all of the world's religious traditions, and now is the time to reinvigorate and mobilize our respective spiritual resources, our influence, and our moral authority to collectively make the case that rainforests are a sacred trust and that tropical deforestation is a sanctity of life issue: it is wrong and it must stop. Religious believers in the DRC can take action at several different levels, including regulating their personal choices and working through their religious institutions to promote education about the value of and dangers to rainforests, advocate for economic choices that safeguard rainforests, and pursue coordinated political initiatives that combat deforestation and support indigenous peoples' rights.

PERSONAL CHOICES

People of faith can honor the planet and forests by making conscious and informed decisions that signal an awareness of where and how their food and consumer items are sourced and who produces them. Diet is one area where personal choice can directly support rainforest health. A shift toward a plantbased diet and eating less meat, particularly beef, is one of the most powerful personal choices any individual can make in solidarity with rainforests, since beef and soy production (much of it used as cattle feed) are important drivers of deforestation. Indeed, animal raising is remarkably land-intensive: supplying meat to a global population requires two-thirds of the world's agricultural land, including pastureland and cropland for feed. This extensive area is often taken from forests. Even reducing meat intake to twice a week can make a measurable impact. Reducing meat consumption also reduces pressure on a range of agricultural resources beyond forest land. Water use, fertilizer production, and greenhouse gas emissions that drive climate change—each of these declines substantially for every foregone kilo of meat.

As with meat, religious believers can make informed consumer choices around palm oil, paper, and wood products. Consumers can look for products made by companies committed to zero deforestation and ensure that up and down their supply-chains there is no activity that negatively impacts forests. This means choosing paper, wood, and other products made from 100 percent post-consumer content materials and opting for virgin wood products certified by reputable authorities such as the Forest Stewardship Council.

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

Religious believers can also help to address deforestation by working with and through their own religious institutions. More than 85 percent of people in the world have a religious affiliation, making the religious public a formidable force for positive social and environmental change when they and their institutions pursue a common goal. Religious institutions and places of worship can incorporate forests into existing communal religious activities and practices such as liturgies, large prayer gatherings, or celebrations around festivals, feasts, or commemorations. For example, communities that emphasize fasting can include a notion of "fasting for the forest." And communities can set aside particular periods to pray for the forests.

Religious communities, congregations, universities, schools and places of worship can also counter deforestation by protecting trees on religiously owned land. This can involve declaring protected forests, putting in place prohibitions on deforestation or hunting wildlife, or restoring degraded lands. Many of these practices have been adopted by Hindus in India, Christians in Africa, Buddhists in Thailand and Cambodia, and followers of Shinto in Japan. Because places of worship are community gathering spots, they can help to set norms around respecting and protecting forests and biodiversity. In Ethiopia, for example, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, a Christian denomination that traces its lineage to the first century, is credited with saving many of the nation's remaining trees. Its churches have planted more than 1000 "sacred forests," each averaging a few football fields in size, around its many churches. The forests are seen as the "clothing" of the churches, serving as community centers, meeting places, schools, and burial grounds, in addition to providing shade for people and habitat for many species.

ECONOMIC ACTION

Every economic decision constitutes a moral decision. Businesses and investors that work in forest landscapes and that depend on forests for their products have a responsibility to social and environmental stewardship that can and must be guided by the world's religious communities. Investor movements driven by people of faith can exert shareholder pressure on businesses by insisting that they adopt sustainable practices, clean up their supply chains, and respect the forests. Corporations run by people with religious convictions need to hear from religious leaders and places of worship that deforestation is a sanctity of life issue and that business practices that destroy forests and biodiversity and that disregard the rights of indigenous peoples and forest communities are in violation of the tenets of their faith.

Divestment can be another potent strategy, given the substantial financial assets and investment portfolios held by some faith groups. There is great potential for a faith-based movement that encourages divestment from industries that engage in deforestation and investment in renewable energy projects, community-based natural resource management and social enterprises that benefit local people and local economies, not multi-national corporations and their shareholders. Making the moral decision to refuse to fund activities that destroy forests is a powerful and effective avenue to bring about change. There is ample evidence to suggest that divestment from industries that damage the planet and a transition to ethical investing can change behavior and will ultimately encourage other investors to follow suit. The faith-based movement to divest from fossil fuels—from oil, coal and gas companies—provides an instructive example of what is possible when religious institutions take a stand in this regard.

EDUCATION

Religious leaders are often among the most trusted figures in any society, looked to for ethical and spiritual guidance on economic, social and political life. They are also teachers and conduits of education, awareness and learning. Religious leaders then are key actors in the effort to raise awareness about the deforestation crisis, the risks that deforestation poses to progress on climate change and sustainable development, and the entry points for people of faith to get into action to fight for the protection of forests. As such, one of the best ways for religious leaders to take action on forest protection is to use their influence and authority to relay information and resources on the deforestation crisis to those in their congregation.

Some of the most powerful lessons to be taken from forests are not on deforestation rates and numbers of displaced indigenous peoples (important as these are), but lessons of the heart that teach appreciation of forests in their spiritual fullness. Attitudes toward forests and trees could be markedly changed for western audiences if forests were viewed primarily as a gift, rather than resources. Indigenous traditions have much to teach in this regard. Gratitude and sufficiency are familiar concepts to people of many faiths; it is not a stretch to imagine applying these attitudes widely in our consumption of palm oil, paper, wood, and other forest products. Such a shift could be transformational.

POLITICAL ACTION

Ending deforestation comes down to mobilizing sufficient political will. Until now, globally and in major rainforest countries, the enforcement of laws and policies around forest protection have been largely insufficient to stop the destruction. Religious believers, leaders and places of worship can help to influence public debate and public policies on forests and the rights of indigenous peoples, making them moral issues that demand a moral response from elected officials. Halting and reversing deforestation will require the cultivation of new public virtues and a seismic shift in values and the way that we as a human family understand and manage forests.

Many religious leaders are uniquely positioned to lobby governments at local, regional, national and global levels and other decision-making bodies that determine the policies and practices that govern forests and the rights of their guardians. Advocacy can take various forms, ranging from quiet diplomacy and back-channel meetings to more public statements, campaigns, petitions and demonstrations around the moral and spiritual responsibility to protect forests. To be effective, coordination across sectors is critical, to ensure that advocacy by religious believers is bolstering and advancing campaigns and efforts already underway by the broader coalition of indigenous peoples, NGOs, multilateral organizations, and grassroots activists working to end deforestation. Religious leaders also have a role in holding political leaders accountable for past commitments, and encouraging greater ambition to new commitments over time.

MULTI-RELIGIOUS COLLABORATION

The gains from deploying religious resources in the fight against deforestation are multiplied when the world's religions stand together. This kind of cooperation can prove more powerful—symbolically and substantively—than unilateral action by individual religious groups. When religious communities demonstrate the ability to work closely together, they build credibility and trust among the population at large. When they speak with one voice on issues like forest protection, their moral authority is magnified, giving them greater ability to influence policies through their influence on individuals and institutions.

For more information on actions you can take to support rainforests in the DRC, connect with the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative in DRC at <u>drc@interfaithrainforest.org</u>.

The ethical case for caring for the planet is deeply rooted in all of the world's religious traditions. Now is the time to mobilize our spiritual resources, our influence, and our moral authority to collectively make the case that rainforests are a sacred trust and that tropical deforestation is a sanctity of life issue: it is wrong and it must stop.

REFERENCES

- Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. Country profiles: Democratic Republic of the Congo. (2019). Available at: http://www.fao.org/countryprofiles/index/en/?iso3=COD.
- 2. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. République démocratique du Congo RAPPORT NATIONAL. (2014).
- Cultural Survival. Observations on the State of Indigenous Human Rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Prep. 29th Sess. United Nations Hum. Rights Counc. Univers. Period. Rev. January 2018. (2018).
- 4. Rights and Resources Initiative. Who own the World's land? A global baseline of formally recognized indigenous and community land rights. (2015).
- Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. Global Forest Atlas. Available at: https://globalforestatlas.yale.edu/region/ congo. (Accessed: 25th January 2019)
- 6. SCBD Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; COMIFAC. Biodiversity and Forest Management in the Congo Basin. (2009).
- 7. Lovold Lars. Personal communication. (2019).
- Republique Democratique Du Congo & Ministere de L'Environment, C. de la N. et D. D. Strategie et Plan D'Action Nationaux de la Biodiversite (2016-2020). (2016).
- 9. Mittermeier, R. A., Robles Gil, P. & Mittermeier, C. G. Megadiversity: Earth's Biologically Wealthiest Nations. (1999).
- 10. UNEP-WCMC. Megadiverse Countries. Biodiversity A-Z (2014). Available at: http://www.biodiversitya-z.org/content/megadiversecountries.pdf. (Accessed: 7th September 2018)
- 11. Giraffe & Okapi Specialist Group. Okapi. 2019 Available at: http://www.giraffidsg.org/okapi/. (Accessed: 6th February 2019)
- 12. Ingram, V. J. The hidden costs and values of NTFP exploitation in the Congo Basin. in XIII CFM 2009 Session 5.3: Small & Medium Forest Enterprises (2009).
- Debroux, Hart, Kaimowitz, Karsenty & Topa. FORESTS IN POST-CONFLICT DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO ANALYSIS OF A PRIORITY AGENDA. (2007).
- 14. de Wasseige, C., Tadoum, M., Eba'a Atyi, R. & Doumenge, C. The Forests of the Congo Basin Forests and climate change. (2015).
- 15. Carbon, biodiversity and land-use in the Central Congo Basin Peatlands.
- 16. Dargie, G. C. et al. Congo Basin peatlands: threats and conservation priorities. doi:10.1007/s11027-017-9774-8
- 17. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations & International Tropical Timber Organization. The State of Forests in the Amazon Basin, Congo Basin and Southeast Asia. (2011). doi:10.1016/j.jacc.2011.02.082
- Countries with the most number of vascular plant species. Available at: https://rainforests.mongabay.com/03plants.htm. (Accessed: 20th March 2019)
- Largest Transboundary Ramsar Site in in the world established in the Congo River Basin | Ramsar. Available at: https://www. ramsar.org/news/largest-transboundary-ramsar-site-in-in-the-world-established-in-the-congo-river-basin. (Accessed: 21st March 2019)
- 20. Lawson, S. Illegal logging in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. (Chatham House, 2014).
- 21. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015. Desk reference. (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2015).
- 22. Potapov, P. V. et al. Quantifying forest cover loss in Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2000-2010, with Landsat ETM + data. Remote Sensing of Environment (2012).
- 23. Q&A: DR Congo conflict BBC News. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-11108589. (Accessed: 26th March 2019)
- 24. Beyers, R. L. et al. Resource wars and conflict ivory: the impact of civil conflict on elephants in the Democratic Republic of Congo--the case of the Okapi Reserve. PLoS One 6, e27129 (2011).
- 25. Draulans, D. & Van Krunkelsven, E. The impact of war on forest areas in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Oryx 36, 35-40 (2011).
- 26. The Democratic Republic of Congo. Available at: https://www1.wfp.org/countries/democratic-republic-congo.
- 27. World Food Program A. WFP Democratic Republic of Congo | Brief. 1-2 (2019).
- 28. de Wasseige, C., Flynn, J., Louppe, D., Hiol Hiol, F. & Mayaux, P. The Forests of the Congo Basin State of the Forest 2013. (2014).
- 29. Tyukavina, A. et al. Congo Basin forest loss dominated by increasing smallholder clearing. Sci. Adv. 4, (2018).
- RDC. Niveau d'Émissions de Reference des Forets pour la Reduction des Émissions dues a la Deforestation en Republique Democratique du Congo. (2018).
- 31. Assessment, P. E. The Democratic Republic of the Congo Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment. United Nations Environment Programme (2011).
- IWGIA. Indigenous peoples in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Available at: https://www.iwgia.org/en/democratic-republic-ofcongo/713-indigenous-peoples-in-the-democratic-republic-of-congo. (Accessed: 25th January 2019)
- Ben-achour, A., Backiny-yetna, P. & Wodon, Q. Democratic Republic of Congo Country Brief Indigenous Peoples. Socioeconomic status of the Pygmies in the Democratic Republic of Congo. (2011).
- Cultural Survival. Observations on the State of Indigenous Human Rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Prep. 29th Sess. United Nations Hum. Rights Counc. Univers. Period. Rev. January 2018. 1, (2018).

- 35. Kipalu, P. et al. Securing Forest Peoples' Rights and Tackling Deforestation in the Democratic Republic of Congo : DEFORESTATION DRIVERS, LOCAL IMPACTS AND RIGHTS-BASED SOLUTIONS. (2016).
- Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI). Democratic Republic of the Congo At a glance. (2018). Available at: http://www.cafi.org/ content/cafi/en/home/partner-countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo.html. (Accessed: 6th February 2019)
- 37. Governemt of the Democratic Republic of Congo. National REDD+ Framework Strategy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Summary for decision-makers. (2012).
- Koch, A. et al. Refining the polytypic species concept of mangrove monitors (Squamata: Varanus indicus group): a new cryptic species from the Talaud Islands, Indonesia, reveals the underestimated diversity of Indo-Australian monitor lizards. Aust. J. Zool. 57, 29–40 (2009).
- 39. Cannon, J. C. DRC adopts a strategy that will bolster community forestry, conservation group says. Mongabay Ser. Glob. For. (2018).
- 40. Gauthier, M. & Pravettoni, R. Clashing over conservation: saving Congo's forest and its Pygmies. The Guardian (2016).
- Kujirakwinja, D. et al. Establishing the Itombwe Natural Reserve: Science, participatory consultations and zoning. Oryx 53, 49-57 (2019).
- 42. Kujirakwinja, D. et al. The conservation of the Itombwe Nature Reserve: Actions and challenges. Gorilla (2015).
- Rainforest Foundation Norway. The future of forest conservation. (2016). Available at: https://www.regnskog.no/en/long-readsabout-life-in-the-rainforest/the-future-of-forest-conservation. (Accessed: 18th March 2019)
- WWF. Itombwe. (2019). Available at: http://www.wwf-congobasin.org/where_we_work/democratic_republic_of_congo/itombwe. cfm. (Accessed: 18th March 2019)
- 45. Governement de la République du Congo. Contribution Prevue Determinee au Niveau National dans le cadre de la CCNUCC Conférence des Parties 21 (INDC). (2015).
- 46. Ministère de l'Environnement et Développement Durable. INDC: Opportunity for Democratic Republic of Congo. (République Démocratique du Congo, 2015).
- Democratic Republic of the Congo. Bonn Challenge Secretariat Available at: http://www.bonnchallenge.org/content/democraticrepublic-congo.
- 48. National REDD+ Framework Strategy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Summary for decision-makers. (2012).
- 49. Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Norway in DRC Norway in The Democratic Republic of Congo. Available at: https://www. norway.no/en/democratic-republic-congo/norway-in-drc/. (Accessed: 25th March 2019)
- 50. Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI). Democratic Republic of the Congo. Available at: http://www.cafi.org/content/cafi/en/ home/partner-countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo.html.
- Carbon Pulse. World Bank carbon funds inks first REDD payment deals. (2019). Available at: http://carbon-pulse.com/68977/. (Accessed: 6th March 2019)
- 52. Butler, R. A. Conservation in the Congo Rainforest. Mongabay (2013).
- Global Forest Atlas. Forest Governance Democratic Republic Congo. Global Institute of Sustainable Forestry, Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (2019). Available at: https://globalforestatlas.yale.edu/congo/forest-governance/dem-rep-congo.
- 54. Sims, S. After Violence, Congo's Virunga National Park Closes for the Year. New York Times (2018).
- 55. Burke, J. Virunga national park in Congo closes to tourists until 2019. The Guardian (2018).
- Weisse, M. & Fletcher, K. Places to watch: 3 forests experiencing rapid clearing right now. GLobal Forest Watch (2018). Available at: https://blog.globalforestwatch.org/places-to-watch/places-to-watch-3-forests-experiencing-rapid-clearing-right-now. (Accessed: 27th June 2019)
- 57. Clarke, J. S. DRC's political turmoil puts Congo Basin rainforest in the crosshairs. Greenpeace (2018).
- 58. Flanagan, J. Rainforest under threat from Congo oil drilling deal. The Times (2018).
- 59. Clarke, J. S. Congo Basin: World's second largest rainforest threatened by palm oil and logging. Greenpeace (2016).
- 60. CAFI Statement on DRC illegal concessions. Available at: http://www.cafi.org/content/cafi/en/home/all-news/CAFI-Statementillegal-logging-concessions-DRC-Feb-2018.html. (Accessed: 25th March 2019)
- Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has started a process to lift its moratorium on the allocation of new logging concessions | Global Witness. Global Witness (2017).
- 62. DRC government reinstates illegal logging concessions in breach of its own moratorium. Greenpeace Africa, Rainforest UK Rainforest, Foundation Norway, Global Witness (2018).
- 63. Cannon, J. C. NGOs seek suspension of forest-related funding to DRC in response to proposed end to logging moratorium. Mongabay Series: Global Forests (2018).
- 64. Foyer de Développement pour l'Autopromotion des Pygmées et Indigènes Défavorisés (FDAPYD Hope Indigenous peoples); Ligue Nationale des Associations des Autochtones Pygmées du Congo (LINAPYCO); Organisation d'Accompagnement et d'Appui aux Pygmées (OSAPY). NGO report on indigenous Pygmy peoples. Universal Periodic Review of the Democratic Republic of Congo. (2013).

ABOUT THIS PRIMER

This primer is part of a series of briefs meant to inform and inspire faith communities to action to help safeguard tropical forests and their inhabitants. Through facts, graphics, analysis, and photos, these primers present the moral case for conserving and restoring rainforest ecosystems, supported by the latest science and policy insights. They bring together the research and practical tools that faith communities and religious leaders need to better understand the importance of tropical forests, to advocate for their protection, and to raise awareness about the ethical responsibility that exists across faiths to take action to end tropical deforestation.

INTERFAITH RAINFOREST INITIATIVE

The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative is an international, multi-faith alliance working to bring moral urgency and faith-based leadership to global efforts to end tropical deforestation. It is a platform for religious leaders and faith communities to work hand-in-hand with indigenous peoples, governments, NGOs and businesses on actions that protect rainforest and the rights of those that serve as their guardians. The Initiative believes the time has come for a worldwide movement for the care of tropical forests, one that is grounded in the inherent value of forests, and inspired by the values, ethics, and moral guidance of indigenous peoples and faith communities.

PARTNERS

The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative welcomes engagement by all organizations, institutions and individuals of good faith and conscience that are committed to the protection, restoration and sustainable management of rainforests.

QUESTIONS?

The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative is eager to work with you to protect tropical forests and the rights of indigenous peoples. Contact us at info@interfaithrainforest.org.



Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment







Religions for Peace 🤿

environment programme







©2019 United Nations Environment Programme



INTERFAITH RAINFOREST INITIATIVE

The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the UN Environment Programme, contributory organisations or editors. The designations employed and the presentations of material in this report do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the UN Environment Programme or contributory organisations, editors or publishers concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries or the designation of its name, frontiers or boundaries. The mention of a commercial entity or product in this publication does not imply endorsement by the UN Environment Programme.