



# SECURING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE IN BILI-UELE

*The African Wildlife Foundation, with support from the European Union, is working in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to ensure that biodiversity thrives and socioeconomic development is enhanced within the Bili-Uele Protected Area Complex.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Bili-Uele Protected Area Complex stretches over 40,000 square kilometers and hosts the world’s largest Eastern chimpanzee population and a critical population of forest elephants.

Since the creation of the Complex in 1974, the country’s wildlife authority, the Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN), has struggled to effectively protect and manage this critical biodiversity area due to a lack of resources and the site’s extraordinary remoteness.

In 2016, a consortium comprising ICCN, AWF, and security consultants MAISHA Group was created to improve the management of this Complex, codified in a Collaborative Management Agreement between ICCN and AWF. This partnership was enriched with the arrival of local environment law experts Juristrale in 2018. Since 2018, the European Union has supported our work under its ECOFAC 6 Preserving Biodiversity and Fragile Ecosystems in Central Africa Programme.





## AWF INTERVENTIONS

- Security and Rule of Law:** AWF provides technical and financial support for ICCN, the Corps de Protection des Parcs Nationaux (CorPPN), and the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) to plan and execute joint patrol missions in the Bili-Mbomu core area, and we are now expanding operations into adjacent insecure areas.
- Rights-based Approach:** Human rights training is embedded into the core training modules of ICCN rangers and is vigorously promoted to partners. AWF also promotes gender equality by championing the hiring of female ecoguards.
- Logistics and Access:** AWF has helped ICCN to establish a new operations base and is in the process of setting up two patrol posts in the north of the landscape. In 2021, AWF purchased a light aircraft, which provides surveillance and biomonitoring services within the landscape. In 2022, AWF opened a new office in the provincial capital of Buta to serve as a logistical base.
- Community Livelihoods:** To address the problem of slash-and-burn agriculture in the landscape, our team ran workshops demonstrating field rotation and other preferred practices. We also helped area farmers repurpose their operations to accommodate seed fields and “school” fields, which are used to practice alternative cultivation techniques. And, we provided training in essential topics such as processing improvements and product marketing.
- Biological Monitoring:** AWF has built the capacity of ICCN managers and eco-guardians to collect and process data for enhanced management and evidence-based decision-making. We provide Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) and CyberTracker devices for law enforcement and ecological monitoring, and train eco-guardians in their use. The result is improved and more adaptive management of the protected area and utilization of staff.

# IMPACT

## IMPROVED SECURITY AND RULE OF LAW



Four years into the program, authorities are now better equipped to handle insecurity challenges in the landscape, with greater presence and capacity in the core area. As a result, there has been a significant reduction in the rate of insecurity around Bili and its surroundings, with 65% of community members reporting feeling a greater sense of security and better ease of movement since the program started.

## CAPACITY BUILDING OF ICCN ECO-GUARDS



Our training and equipping eco-guardians has allowed park managers to expand the patrol area and improve intelligence systems and cooperation.

The eco-guardians are now using CyberTracker, the Spatial Monitoring And Reporting Tool (SMART) and drones to gather information to improve adaptive management of the protected area.

## COMMUNITY BUY-IN



There has been increased community awareness of and participation in conservation activities. The needle is inching toward a more sustainability-conscious Bili, and this is expected to translate into a recovery of wildlife populations, rehabilitation of degraded wildlife habitats, and a more prosperous local community.



*The African Wildlife Foundation's mission is to ensure wildlife and wild lands thrive in modern Africa.*

**KENYA**  
Headquarters  
AWF Conservation Centre  
Ngong Road, Karen  
P.O. Box 310, 00502  
Nairobi, Kenya  
+254 711063000

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC  
OF CONGO**  
Avenue Colonel  
Lukusa N° 16  
Apartment 3 A, 3è niveau  
Immeuble les Palmiers  
Kinshasa, Gombe, DRC  
+243 812 628 204  
+243 817 160 263

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[awf.org/twitter](https://www.twitter.com/awf.org)

[africanwildlife@awf.org](mailto:africanwildlife@awf.org)  
[www.awf.org](http://www.awf.org)