

Non-Technical Solutions

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Mayombe's mamas produce banana chips to fight deforestation and protect great apes

Description of the project: ESI Congo works on improving women's livelihoods in the villages of Loaka and Magne in south-western Congo while preserving the Mayombe forest. An agroforestry platform was created and is managed by a women's group; the processing of plantains into banana chips and their sales provide new income to the wives of former hunters, offering a sustainable alternative to poaching. Plantains are provided by former hunters converted to agroforestry in order to curb traditional slash-and-burn farming practices in the forest. The responsible and ethical banana chips' manufacturing provides a new value chain for plantains that are cultivated by 90% of the households of this area.

Climate impact: The project is promoting products from local agroforestry in order to avoid felling trees over large areas (25 ha since 2017) for other agricultural purposes. Preserving the forest ensures a reduction in CO2 emissions and protects vital ecological niches, natural home of the great apes. The chip's manufacturing process follows a comprehensive and environmentally friendly approach including low water consumption (50 l. of water for 15 kg of chips) and efficient firewood use of bamboo, an invasive species in this area.

Gender impact: Women are given the opportunity to access jobs, which are rare for them in this region. They gain financial independence and a place in the local economy. This brings social, economic and environmental benefits for the whole community. Eleven women have received technical and entrepreneurship training; they are consulted in all strategic orientations thanks to horizontal decision-making processes. Their self confidence is being raised and they are encouraged to make active proposals so they can eventually manage the production unit independently.

Scalability / replicability: Local authorities provided political support for this new economic activity, as well as logistical assistance through the donation of land for the chips production unit. The villagers want to increase the production rate in order to integrate more women. This local economic development model, based on ecosystem protection, is replicable in all countries where banana trees are grown and where the socio-cultural context allows to upgrade plantains products.



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