

BNCFF

PROJECT IMPACT REPORTS

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The Blue Natural Capital Financing Facility (BNCFF) supports the development of sound, investable Blue Natural Capital (BNC) projects with clear ecosystem service benefits, multiple income streams and appropriate risk-return profiles.

This score card is part of the final assessment of the projects supported by BNCFF (2019-2021). Each score card provides an overview of a particular project, details its achievements, its success and challenges, before presenting the way forward.

Feasibility study on the conservation of the Douala-Edéa forested wetlands, Cameroon



BNCFF

Blue Natural Capital Financing Facility

Project in a snapshot

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| Title | Feasibility study on the conservation of the Douala-Edéa forested wetlands |
| Country | Cameroon |
| Project Developer | EcoAct S.A.S |
| Vision | Offer comprehensive decarbonization strategies and reach ambitions on net zero emissions. |
| Overall Project goals | The study's objective is to identify the potential emissions reduction that can be fostered thanks to the implementation of an action plan that will enable improved conservation and restauration of Douala-Edéa National Park's wetlands. |
| BNCF supported activities | The funding provided by BNCF was used to initiate a feasibility assessment for the proposed project to be used for the drafting of the Project Design Document (PDD). |
| Main stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EcoAct S.A.S • Ministère des forêts et de la faune (MINFOF), represented locally by the conservation service of the Douala-Edéa National Park • The local population consist largely of fishermen, about 12,000 people distributed across 30 villages and 20 fishing camps. • Cameroon Wildlife Conservation Society (CWSC) is the leading Conservation Society in Douala and the main initiator of the transformation of Douala-Edéa Wildlife Reserve into a National Park. • S2 Services: a local boutique consultancy specialised in carbon finance |
| BNC focus | Blue carbon – mangrove restoration, mangrove conservation, MPA strengthening |
| Duration | 5 months (2021) |
| Type of funding | Grant |
| Proof of concept | EcoAct has been working on developing an improved cookstove project in Kenya since 2011 and have successfully distributed to 60,000 households. EcoAct has also developed an LPG stove project in Darfur in partnership with Practical Action, a project that was awarded by the UNFCCC in 2013 for the work on energy access. EcoAct has successfully generated over a million Voluntary Emission Reductions (VERs) Carbon Credits through Gold Standard. |
| Links/synergies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to UN SDGs 1 (no poverty), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Life Below Water) and 15 (Life on Land), • Contributes to climate adaptation and mitigation • Biodiversity conservation • Strengthening of the park ´s management • Supporting the transition to sustainable livelihoods (clean cookstoves, ecotourism) |

1. Project summary

The proposed project would conserve about 58,500 hectares of wetlands forest in the Douala-Edéa National Park (DENP) in Cameroon and restore at least 500 hectares of mangroves. The dominant species in this area is *Rhizophora racemosa*, reaching heights of 50 meters, the highest of the world. This species is also preferred by local communities as fuel for fish smoking (with 71% of fish smokers using mangrove wood as fuel). Fishing camps have been established throughout the mangrove forests in the country, and because of population pressure, the conservation of wetlands is becoming an increasingly urgent topic. In 10 years, mangroves have decreased from 250,000 to 134,400 hectares in Cameroon. This has several effects: it depletes halieutic resources as mangroves are an important habitat for breeding therefore decreasing fish stocks available. It also has tremendous impact on other biodiversity (shellfish, birdlife), and finally may accelerate coastal erosion as mangroves are a natural barrier to sea-level rise.

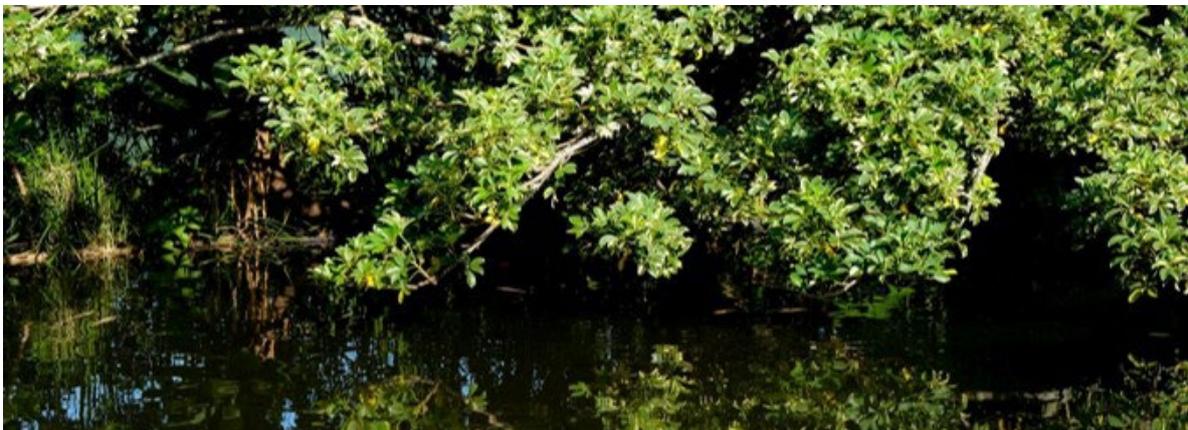
Despite its classification as a National Park in 1932, and being announced as a marine and terrestrial national park in 2018 - made possible by the effort of Rainforest Trust and the Cameroon Wildlife Conservation Society (CWCS) - the proposed project area still suffers from firewood and urban infrastructure development due to population pressures, and needs additional community-based support to reduce pressures for deforestation. Without such support, the area will continue to suffer from deforestation.

The project aims at implementing a REDD+ in the areas within the DENP that are under the most pressure and contains the majority of the park's mangroves. The REDD+ project area would cover 58,500 ha of forested wetland, 43 000ha of which are mangroves. While the REDD+ policy can be extended to other parts of the Park covering inland forests, this study focused on mangrove ecosystems, which seemed the most at risk.

2. Purpose of the engagement with BNCFF

The support from BNCFF helped undertake a feasibility assessment for the proposed project in order to draft the first lay-out of a Project Design

Document (PDD) necessary for carbon certification and therefore future investment and viability purposes related to carbon credits schemes.



3. Main outputs and results achieved with BNCFF support

The Douala Edéa REDD+ feasibility study was completed. The study identifies the main drivers for deforestation and degradation, drafts a first assessment of deforestation rates thanks to

metadata from the academic literature, and provides a first holistic logical framework action plan with associated costs while assessing the potential revenue from carbon finance.

4. Success and challenges

A literature review highlighted that past assessment had contrary findings on the mangrove degradation and loss in the area of interest. In response, the present project looked for data to assess the current baseline of the status of the mangrove. However, data is lacking, and its acquisition proved challenging: for instance, the area of the study is prone to cloud coverage, rendering satellite image acquisition inefficient. This further highlighted the need to conduct field data collection (biomass and carbon field inventories), which needs much more investment from local academic experts through the establishment of sample plots while reactivating the monitoring of permanent plots.

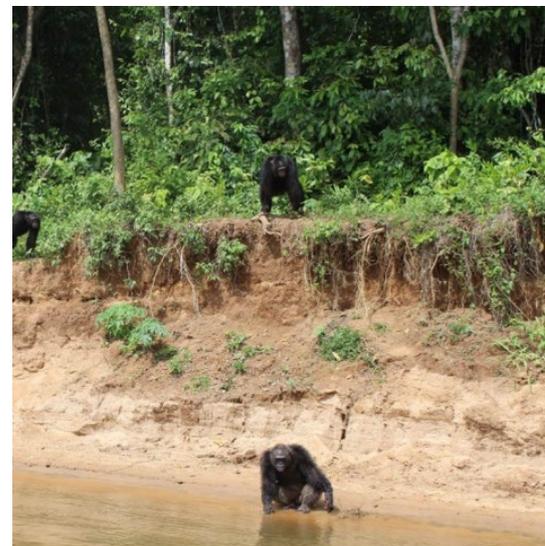
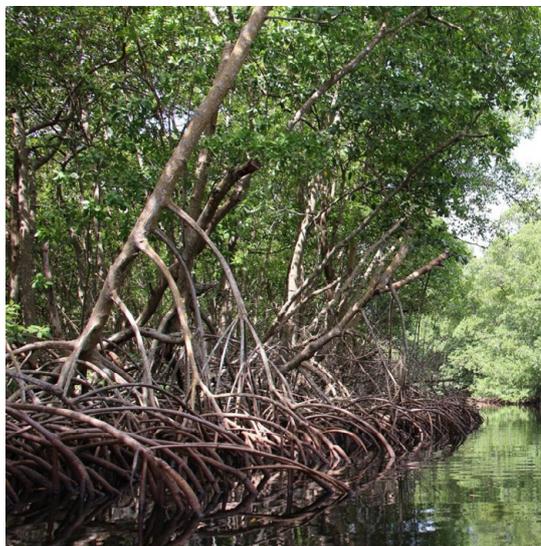
The first assessment we provide is indeed not sufficient and well-grounded enough to gather investors around a REDD+ project and needs much more analysis. The action plan would also need to attract blended finance as some actions (e.g. adaptation to climate change), are increasing the REDD+ project's costs. These additional costs could

be supported by other finance streams such as the Green Climate Fund.

Another challenge is the complexity of the Verified Carbon Standard (VSC) blue carbon methodology VM007. Understanding the level of requirements (e.g. for GIS maps) has been subject to many discussions between stakeholders before being able to provide such data.

In addition to benefiting the acquisition of data, being present on the ground would also foster the engagement with local partners and stakeholders, which has been limited, particularly in a COVID-19 environment.

The engagement with the government will notably need strengthening: at present all interactions are being channelled with local technical partners, mainly CWCS, whilst the land ownership lies with the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife.



5. Looking beyond BNCFF

After completing the feasibility study, this endeavor appears worth pursuing. The partnerships established will help address the identified gaps, even though the relationships with local institutional and technical partners will need strengthening.

The three stakeholders of the study have identified required data, missing documentation and costs associated. An action plan is decided on whether to gather other financings to pursue the project. Indeed, it is too risky at this stage for private VCS actors to fully invest in this project

Carbon finance alone will not conserve the area, and blending investments and financing (various sources of financing and financial instruments) are to be considered at least to launch the project in the first years. Once the project is implemented, revenues from carbon finance and other project activities will cover the operational costs of the project.

The feasibility study concludes that a clear potential exists and needs for better conservation could be identified. Several data are still lacking and need further investment and time to be collected and assessed. Collecting remote sensing data has been challenging due to permanent cloud cover over Cameroon, precise ground data are lacking, and local organisation and technical capacities needs to be further assessed. Concerning the distribution and adoption of energy efficient devices (improved cookstoves, efficient smokers) within the Park and in the southern outskirts of Douala, conducting specific usage survey will be necessary to finalise the potential assessment following standard guidelines. To be viable, the project will also require a strong benefit-sharing mechanism, agreement with central and local public institutions which might be challenging in the absence of a REDD+ jurisdictional framework.

Disclaimer: The BNCFF provides assistance to projects on their path to becoming sound, investable Blue Natural Capital (BNC) businesses with clear ecosystem service benefits, multiple income streams and appropriate risk-return profiles. Beyond the support provided, IUCN and the BNCFF donor(s) bear no responsibility for the development of these projects, their ultimate bankability or sustainability, their investors, donors, and funding arrangements, unless otherwise noted.

Photo courtesy by the Project Developer.

Since its launch in 2018, the BNCFF has become a global brand name in Ocean Impact Finance. After screening over a hundred proposals, it has supported a suite of blue Nature-based Solutions (NbS) pioneer projects with grant funding.

<https://bluenaturalcapital.org/supported-projects/>

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