

NEW NETWORK AIMS TO COMBAT TRANSNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME IN THE CONGO BASIN

The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime is committed to supporting a coalition of Central African civil society organizations that has launched an ambitious initiative to tackle transnational environmental crime in the Congo Basin. Supported by the [French Foreign Affairs Ministry](#) through the local embassies, the two-year project aims to create a robust network of environmental defenders and an observatory to monitor and combat illegal activities harming the region's rich biodiversity and indigenous communities.

The project, title **"Network of Environmental Defenders Fighting Transnational Environmental Crime in the Forests of the Congo Basin"** is led by Action pour la Protection en Afrique des Déplacés Internes et des Migrants Environnementaux ([APADIME](#), Cameroon), Action pour la Promotion et Protection des Peuples et Espèces Menacés ([APEM](#), DR Congo), and [IVINDO FM](#) (Gabon), and it will strengthen local capacities, provide high-quality environmental crime data, and empower local women to contribute to sustainable development.

Environmental crime is one of the most pressing issues in the Congo Basin, where vast networks of organized criminal groups engage in illegal logging, poaching, and land encroachment, threatening both the ecosystem and the rights of indigenous communities. The initiative seeks to address the links between environmental crimes and human rights violations in the Congo Basin. Beyond the environmental impacts, it seeks to protect the rights of indigenous communities who are often marginalized by the illegal activities threatening their lands and resources. In doing so, it underscores the importance of securing land rights and protecting the cultural heritage of these communities, which have long been marginalized.

Recognizing this urgent challenge, the project focuses on:

- Establishing and strengthening a regional network of environmental defenders.
- Creating a sub-regional observatory to track environmental crimes and human rights violations.
- Empowering indigenous communities, particularly women, through training and financial support for sustainable livelihoods.

The initiative will focus in particular on key locations in Cameroon (Sangmélima, Meyomessi, Mindourou, Grand Djaposten, Yabassi), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (South-Kivu, Kabare, Kahele), and Gabon (Ogooué province, Zadié department, Mekambo city). Officially launched in **July 2024**, the project will run for **two years**.

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime ([GI-TOC](#)) serves as the technical partner to support the establishment of a regional observatory on transnational environmental crimes. The GI-TOC

provides training and mentorship to the coalition of civil society organizations with the aim to influence positively policy makers and law enforcement in the region and beyond.

This project is framed within the “Fonds de solidarité pour les projets innovants” (FSPI), a French programme that supports initiatives promoting civil society engagement, environmental protection, and human rights development. This initiative is an open call to governments, international organizations, and individuals to join forces in combating transnational environmental crimes and securing a sustainable future for the Congo Basin and the planet more broadly.

