

# Findings

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Good Practice  
Infobrief



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## Africa Region

# Regional Environmental Information Management Program

Forest ecosystems in the Congo Basin are seen as global biodiversity «hot spots.» Several donor agencies have undertaken efforts to assist national governments in addressing these concerns within the framework of the Convention on Biodiversity (Rio 1992). A study of a number of initiatives in the region identified a critical problem in this field as the lack of comprehensive and accurate environmental information, and the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of access to it.

The REIMP addresses this situation by creating a regional network of public, private and non-governmental agencies based in Central Africa willing to share information and capitalize on their experiences and lessons learned.

The primary goal of the REIMP was to improve planning and management of natural resources in the Congo Basin, with specific focus on biodiversity conservation, by providing the various stakeholders with appropriate information on the environment in response to the needs they identify.

The project had five objectives:

- Ensure the circulation of environmental information and optimize benefits from existing initiatives;
- Foster involvement of decision-makers in environmental information use and facilitate sound land use planning in the Congo Basin;
- Provide users (public and private sectors, NGOs, sub-regional and international organizations) with environmental information meeting their demand;
- Strengthen national capacities for environmental information management;
- Implement a Regional Fund for Local Initiatives (REFLI).

In order to implement the REIMP, six governments in the Congo Basin (Cameroon, CAR, Congo, DRC, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon) signed a regional memorandum of understanding creating the “Association pour le Développement de l’Information Environnementale” (ADIE) as the implementing agency for the REIMP. The Government of Chad joined the ADIE in 2001.

## **Impact**

The project has established a basis for a better management of information related to natural resources. The project collected, organized and set means to disseminate information used in decision-making processes. The REIMP enabled it by facilitating:

- a better understanding of the region’s needs in terms of environmental, scientific and social knowledge and in terms of management of environmental information;
- the assessment of the willingness of countries to implement information systems in order to better manage natural resources along with the promotion of forest information management systems;
- the creation of tools to archive and manage information;
- the promotion of the involvement of local communities in the management of natural resources;
- capacities building.

## **Lessons learned**

- Promoting development by providing information is a good way of bringing people together in a region.
- Innovative development topics can be introduced in a region by widely involving every active stakeholder from the very beginning.
- Information to improve environmental management requires an important adaptation of mindset.
- A regional approach has the advantage of enabling economies of scale to create and share information and knowledge.
- The financing of the implementing agency should be part of an agreement with donors.
- Project management should put more emphasis on linking financial management and monitoring & evaluation.
- Technical experts recruited or appointed in project implementing agencies should ensure an adequate transfer of knowledge towards local executives.
- The project should ensure better links with the private sector because this sector is a key recipient of the information disseminated and produced by the project.

*This Infobrief was based on World Bank Implementation Completion Report No. 29549, from which detailed information can be obtained.*