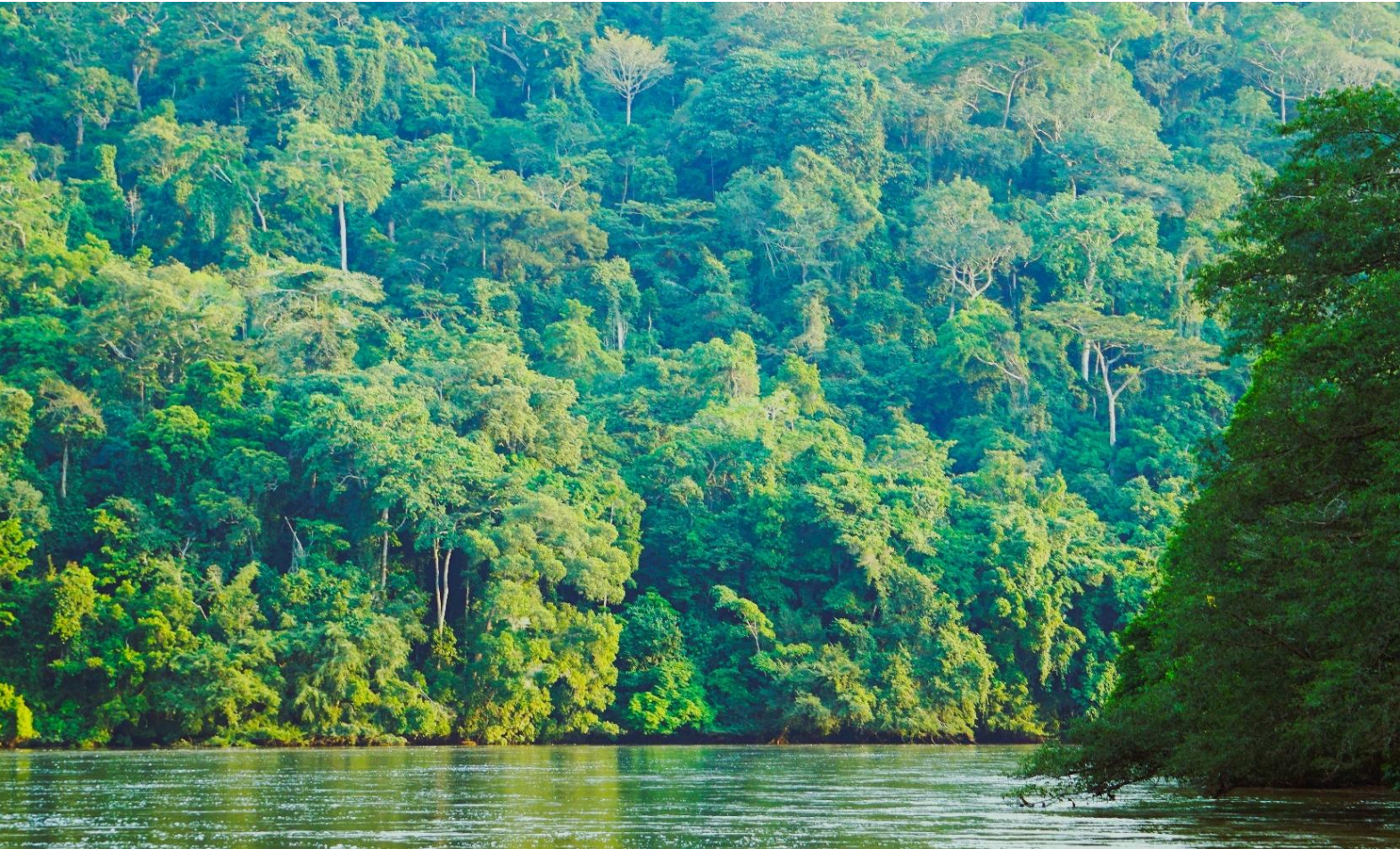




Dzanga Sangha Protected Areas



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www.dzanga-sangha.org

Newsletter December 2025/January 2026



DSPA receives funds from



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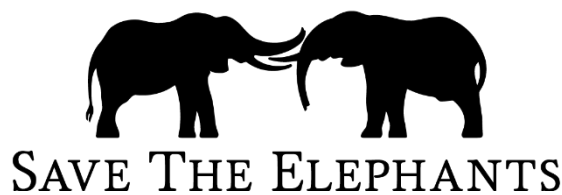




DSPA collaborates with



NDIMA KALI

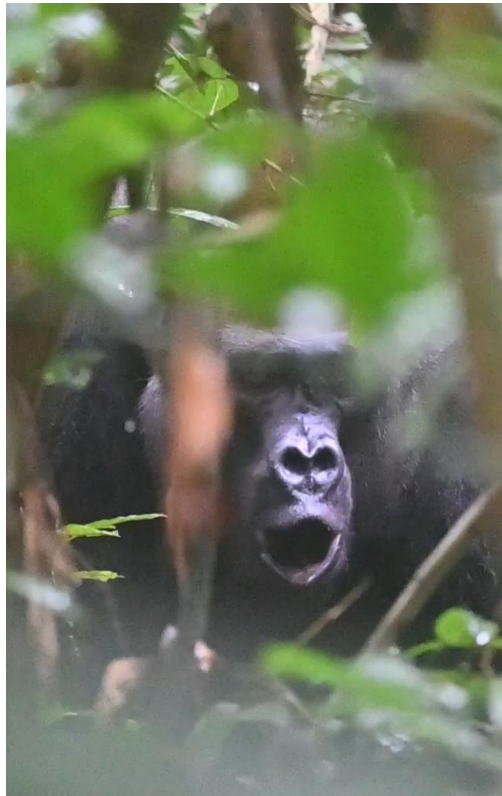




Wildlife



Limo



Bokala



Missiki

© Andrea Sotto Mayor

In 2024, the loss of our last habituated gorilla group, the Makumba group, marked a difficult turning point for the Dzanga Sangha Protected Areas. Without a habituated group, gorilla viewing for tourists, researchers, and film crews had come to a halt.

In response, the Primate Habituation Program (PHP) teams achieved a remarkable success: in less than three years rather than the usual five or more the group led by the silverback Limo was successfully habituated to human presence. This achievement was made possible thanks to several females already accustomed to humans from the former Mata and Makumba groups, whose calm behavior helped Limo quickly tolerate our presence.

Since July 2025, Limo's group has been officially open to visitors. Already, 235 people have had the opportunity to meet Limo and his family, revitalizing tourism activities in Dzanga-Sangha.

The momentum continues. Two additional groups are currently under habituation. The first is led by Bokala, a dynamic and still highly demonstrative silverback who charges and vocalizes but is steadily progressing. The second group is led by Missiki, a notably calm and observant male who often sits quietly watching us, he may even be a descendant of the former Munye group (monitored from 1997 to 2004).

After several challenging years, these encouraging results reflect the dedication and perseverance of our teams especially our Ba'aka trackers.

PHP akiri aya na ndusu!

The Primate Habituation Program has risen again.

Dzanga Forest Elephant Project – Highlights 2025

Building Central African Conservation Leadership

Through the Dzanga Forest Elephant Project, we are mentoring a new generation of Central African researchers. Lead researchers Michael Boungalo and Isidore Yankousse are becoming experts in forest elephant ecology. Michael spearheads bioacoustic monitoring of firearm activity and trains university students, while Isidore leads studies on male elephant behavior and mentors new team members. Assistants Dieu-Sauve Ndamokonziade and Zilpha Larebaye, both hired in 2025, are advancing quickly in their training, and all Ba'aka assistants contribute traditional knowledge to enrich scientific inquiry. Of 11 team members, 10 are Central Africans, including six Ba'aka assistants and one female scientist, underscoring our commitment to inclusivity and local empowerment.



©Elephant Listening Project.
Picture caption: Michael Boungalo



©Elephant Listening Project.
 Picture caption: Isidore Yankouisse

Expanding Acoustic Monitoring

Since 2023, the acoustic grid has grown to 41 recorders covering 1,140 km², including the Dzanga sector of the national park and the community hunting zone. Local community members maintain the system in the hunting zone, which additionally to detecting illegal gunshot activity and elephant distribution, it monitors monkey species.



Sensitization posters of bioacoustics monitoring in the community hunting zone

Inspiring the Next Generation

A 10-day internship program for Ba'aka high school students provides hands-on conservation experience, with activities such as forest sound walks, thermal imaging, and guided research projects. To further engagement, an activity booklet was developed to introduce Dzanga Bai and forest elephants through interesting exercises. It is designed to ensure that children and students from diverse backgrounds can connect with conservation in meaningful ways.



©Elephant Listening Project.

Picture caption: Jean-Christian (left) and Loche (right), two Ba'aka students, at the end of their internship showing the results of their own research studies.



The **Phaedra IV group** with a new baby at Dzanga Bai, observed on November 26, 2025.

© Elephant Listening Project for the Yang Center/ WWF



At Dzanga Bai, monitoring is carried out in collaboration with the Elephant Listening Project to document mammal presence at the clearing. In 2025, Over the course of the year, more than 1,400 individuals were observed passing through Dzanga Bai. The age range was broad, from newborns to individuals estimated to be over 70 years old, reflecting a well-structured and multi-generational population.

A total of 68 births were documented during the monitoring period. These records provide important demographic information and contribute to understanding population trends and reproductive success in Dzanga Sangha.

Research & Monitoring Highlights – 2025

In 2025, the research and monitoring program of DSPA continued to strengthen biodiversity knowledge across the landscape through different surveys and innovative monitoring tools.

Wildlife Inventory



A major wildlife inventory was conducted with 6 field teams and 48 staff members during 12 deployments. The survey produced an important dataset including:

- 26,000+ camera trap videos
- 386 elephant DNA samples
- 990 eDNA leaf swabs
- 14,963 wildlife observations

The final results will be available very soon.

More info on our website :
<https://dzanga-sangha.org/stories/wildlife-monitoring/>

Elephant Movement Patterns

Between 2018 and 2021, 30 forest elephants were fitted with GPS collars. Data analysis is conducted in collaboration with the teams from the Elephant Tracking Initiative and Save the Elephants. Tracking data reveal strong connectivity with Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park and provide valuable insights into bai use, and conservation risk mapping.

Analyses of the GPS tracking data also reveal distinct and recurring movement patterns among forest elephants within and beyond the Dzanga-Sangha landscape, with Bai Hokou and Dzanga Bai serving as major focal points. Most collared elephants show a strong preference for one of these two forest bais. However, the results also indicate that Dzanga Bai is not visited by all elephants, highlighting individual differences in habitat use and movement strategies across the landscape.

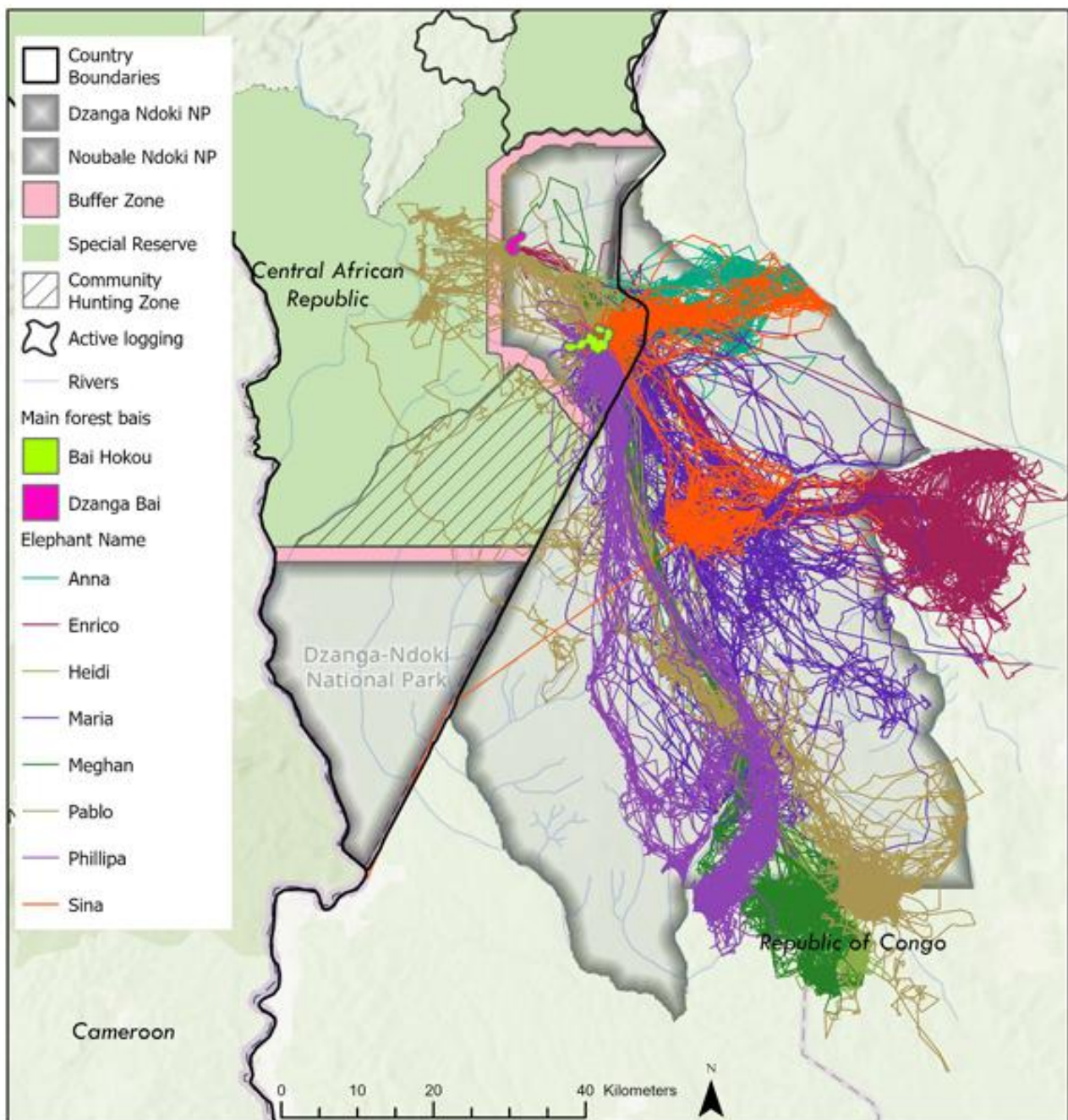


Figure 6. Movement tracks from nine of the elephants collared in 2018 that preferred Bai Hokou.

Antipoaching

At Dzanga-Sangha, anti-poaching efforts have significantly strengthened in 2025 through reinforced staffing, operational deployment, and international engagement.

A total of 42 new eco-guards were recruited through an inclusive and transparent process. Their initial training was delivered by Chengeta Wildlife.



DSPA rangers preselection process © Nuria Ortega

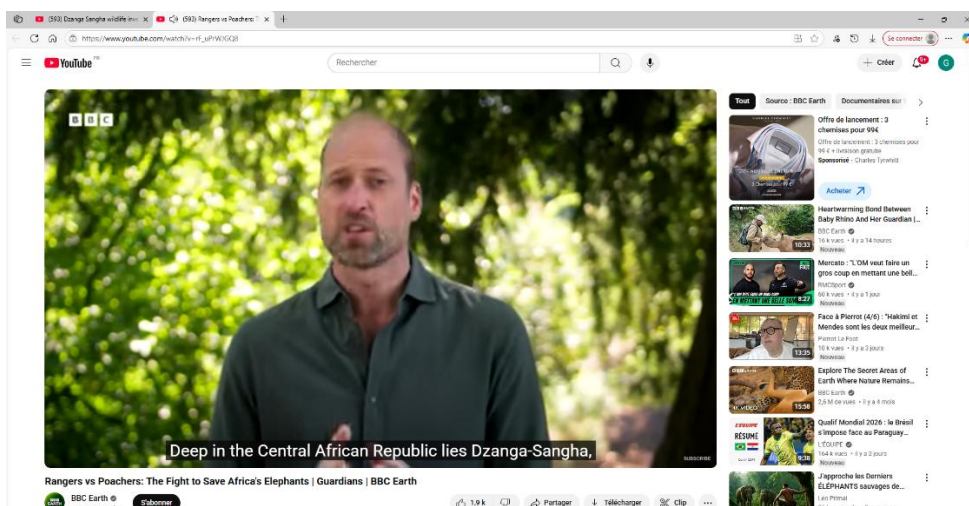


©Luca Catalano

International recognition

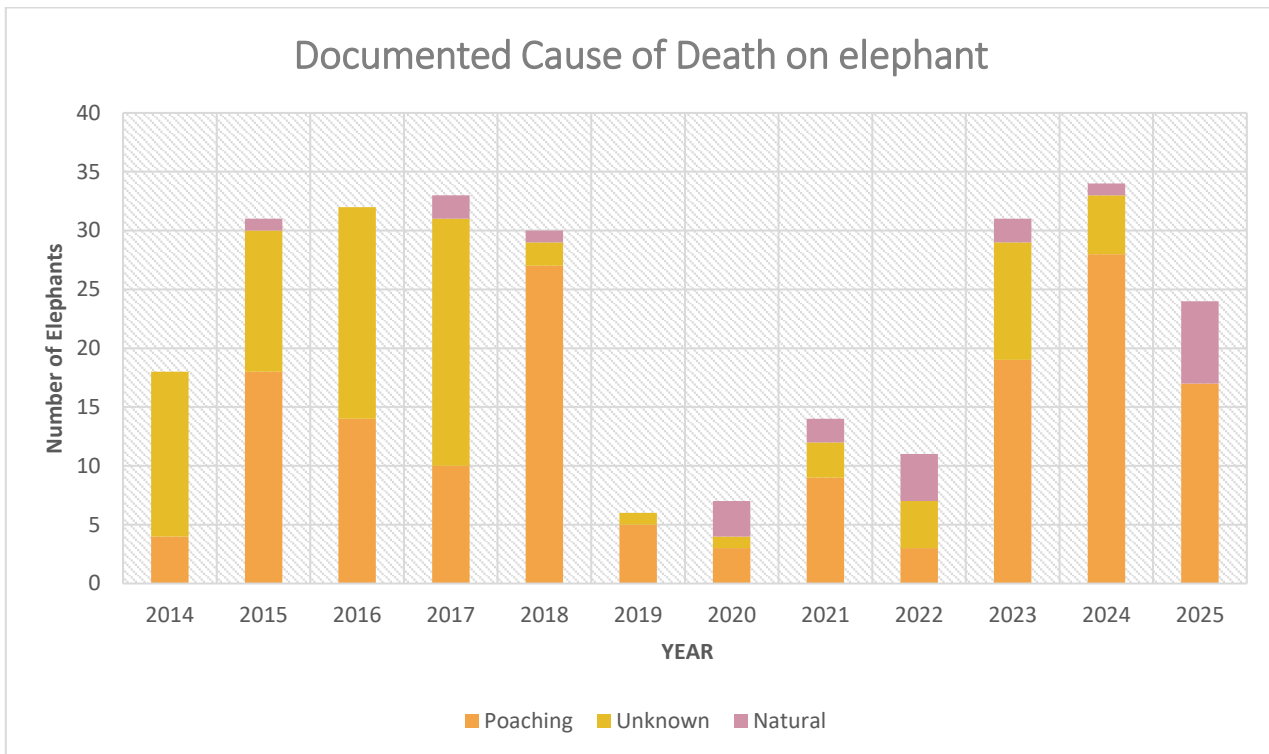
The work of the rangers also gained international visibility through a feature on eco-guard Modiki Claver, produced for BBC Earth as part of a documentary series produced by Prince William. In addition, APDS representatives participated in the African Rangers Congress in Kenya and took part in the Wildlife Rangers Challenge, highlighting their commitment at both continental and global levels.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rF_uPrWJGQ8





Operationally, 17 patrol teams conducted 417 patrols in 2025, covering 25,389 km on foot in forest conditions and deploying a total of 19,543 ecoguard workdays. Enforcement efforts led to the discovery of 17 poached elephant carcasses, a decrease compared to 31 recorded in 2024. Rangers seized 148 firearms (including 9 large-caliber rifles and 2 military weapons), 171 rounds of ammunition, 33,608 wire snares, and 2,285 kg of bushmeat. In total, 93 offenders were arrested, and 22 cases were brought before the courts.



Analysis of documented elephant mortality shows a marked decline in poaching after the 2018 peak, particularly between 2019 and 2022, reflecting the impact of strengthened law enforcement in Dzanga-Sangha. However, poaching levels rose again in 2023 and 2024. Although 2025 figures indicate a slight decrease compared to 2024, the threat remains significant.

Community Conservation

Rural electrification

In 2025 and ongoing, a rural electrification initiative is currently being developed in Dzanga-Sangha in partnership with Barefoot College International. Over 2025, consultations were held with the communities of Babongo and Nguengueli to define how the project should be organized locally, alongside energy-use surveys covering more than 90 households, about one-third of them Ba'Aka. The project encourages households to redirect similar amounts into village savings associations, combined with financial literacy support and access to higher-quality solar equipment. So far, nearly 350 households have signed up, broadly reflecting the ethnic composition of each community. While DSPA supports the implementation phase, the goal is for communities to independently manage the service through elected village committees and savings groups culminating in the training of local Solar Mamas. Four "solar mamas" are being trained by Barefoot College Zanzibar. Jolie-Fanette, Valerine, Therese and Annie, left everything behind to represent the Central African Republic, their villages, and Dzanga Sangha, in this international and multicultural



school, for more than 3 months. They have already adapted well to the sandy white beaches of Zanzibar, the new dress-code, and most of all, engaging training on women empowerment, solar engineering and many more!



Leaving CAR for more than 3 months/ First day in Zanzibar



Practical courses on repairing solar material / Learning in an international school!



Beekeeping, the Tanzanian way.

Agroforestry

In 2025, the agroforestry project made substantial progress in Monassao and surrounding areas. APDS teams carried out extensive training and community consultations to ensure strong local ownership and participation. Nearly 300 beneficiaries are now involved, working in rotation in the nursery, which currently holds around 100,000 seedlings under cultivation. These young plants are being carefully maintained as they await the upcoming rainy season, when participants will begin transplanting them into their own fields. This year has therefore been marked not only by technical growth in production capacity, but also by strengthened community engagement and skills development.



©APDS/WWF



©APDS/WWF



©APDS/WWF

Radio Ndjoku Celebrated 10 Years in 2025

Founded in 2010 by RFI Planète Radio and supported by WWF and the European Delegation, Radio Ndjoku was officially inaugurated in November 2015 with a grand celebration bringing together all communities of Bayanga. Over the years, the team has received ongoing training in radio and video production, making it one of the most professional media teams in the country. By giving local and indigenous populations a voice to support collaborative management of protected natural reserves, Radio Ndjoku has become a unique example in environmental conservation worldwide.

To celebrate its 10th anniversary, we are planning this year in 2026 a special local event near the station, open to everyone. The photos below are cherished memories from the inauguration ceremony ten years ago.



© Max Bale



© Max Bale

Health

In 2025, a partnership agreement between the Ministry of Health and WWF CAR was officially signed, securing institutional support for the mobile clinic in alignment with national health policies. Following a pilot phase launched in June in six priority villages across Dzanga-Sangha, the clinic delivered 2,091 consultations in 2025, effectively reaching its main targets: children under five and pregnant or breastfeeding women, amongst the Baaka community. While community uptake has been strong, challenges remain malaria, diarrhea, and skin diseases continue to be the most common pathologies, highlighting the urgent need for improved access to safe water and strengthened referral mechanisms. The Dzanga Sangha health initiative also demonstrates the critical importance of partnerships, both with national health institutions and with private clinics in Monasao and Belemboke, which play a key role in supporting healthcare delivery particularly for the Indigenous BaAka communities.



Medical consultation in Koundapapaye ©Stef de Bethune

One Health

In 2025, the One Health approach became a central component of activities in the Dzanga-Sangha Protected Areas. With the inauguration of the field laboratory and strengthened scientific collaborations, health surveillance of humans, wildlife, and domestic animals significantly expanded. Samples were collected from monitored primates, animal carcasses, and small mammals, while laboratory analyses also supported local public health efforts, particularly for Mpxv outbreak in the region. At the same time, community outreach, training, and epidemiological surveillance activities were implemented across several villages. This integrated approach highlights the strong interconnection between ecosystem health, animal health, and human well-being, making One Health a key pillar for better understanding and addressing conservation challenges in Dzanga-Sangha.



Field team collecting samples on bats for genetic species identification and zoonotic pathogen testing ©Lorenzo Lagostina



Microbiologist Jephthe busy in the Une Seule Santé field lab in Bayanga analyzing the samples of the human clinical surveillance



DSPA Administration

Dzanga-Sangha Day in the Central African Republic

In November 2025, as you may already know, we celebrated the first-ever Dzanga-Sangha (DS) Day, highlighting this UNESCO World Heritage landscape and living One Health model. We were honored by the participation of the President of the Central African Republic and a delegation of senior government officials, alongside the European Union Ambassador in CAR and other international partners, including HIOH and the Pasteur Institute. DS Day highlighted the vital role of protecting biodiversity while promoting sustainable development and community resilience.

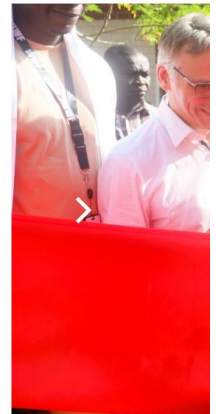
Link to DSPA website article: <https://dzanga-sangha.org/stories/first-ever-dzanga-sangha-day/>

Link to DSPA youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NuiMDRcoN-c>



"The President's visit was especially memorable as it marked the inauguration of the 'Papa' building. This new facility will host training courses, serve as an exhibition hall, and function as a museum—showcasing the knowledge young people gain from their elders and preserving our traditions."

Marrial, Head of the local organisation Ndima Kali



Following the official launch in Bangui, the European Union Ambassador to the Central African Republic, Diego Escalona Patuel, accompanied President Touadéra to Bayanga. Together with ministers, traditional leaders, and partners, they spent two days in the field engaging with local and Indigenous communities and seeing first-hand how conservation investments are generating tangible benefits through eco-tourism development, access to solar energy, and One Health approaches that strengthen disease prevention and improve overall health outcomes.

Tourism and marketing

Tourism continued to grow in 2025, with 688 visitors from around 30 nationalities, reflecting increasing international interest while maintaining a strong commitment to low-impact, high-quality ecotourism.

New operators, including Cookson Adventures and Odyssey Collection, have strengthened Dzanga-Sangha's positioning in both luxury and responsible travel markets.

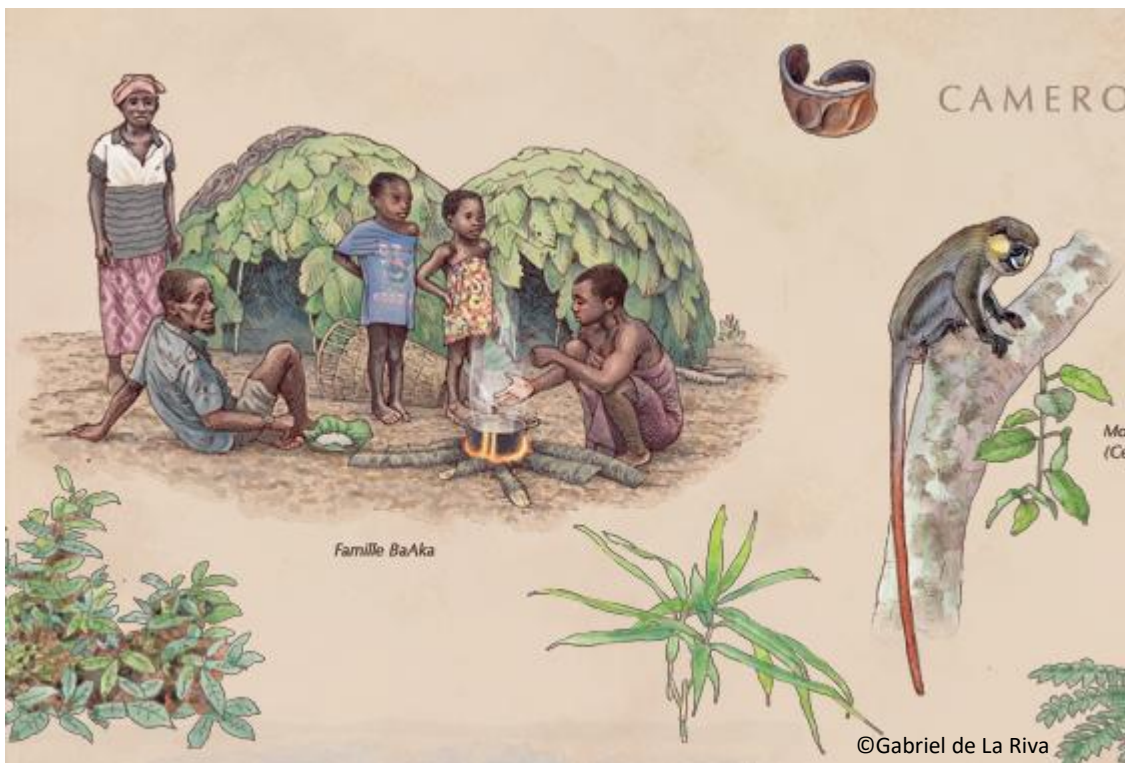
DSPA also gained strong international visibility through major media coverage and features in leading travel outlets, including:

- *The Times*: <https://www.thetimes.com/travel/inspiration/cruises/republic-of-the-congo-brazzaville-expeditions-ducret-bnfr5zvs2>



- *Conde Nast Traveller*: <https://www.cntraveller.com/article/inside-africas-green-heart-where-wildlife-rules-the-roost>

In our next newsletter, we will present the new DSPA poster, below is a preview with a few images.



- *This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of WWF CAR and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.*