



ERAIFT research activities in the Sankuru landscape and capacity building of local partner institutions

September 2023-January 2024

ERAIFT, a category 2 center under the auspices of UNESCO, is implementing a project in Sankuru province entitled: "Contribution à l'amélioration du niveau de compétence technique des institutions de recherche à travers un accompagnement scientifique adéquat des dispositifs de recherche-action dans la province du Sankuru en RD Congo".

This project is one of the actions in the implementation of ENABEL's DeSIRA Agro-forestry program entitled: "Climate neutrality, conservation and green economy from an inclusive rubber sector in the Lomela and Lodja territories (Sankuru province)". The vision of the DeSIRA Agro-forestry program is "to support local stakeholders in the development and implementation of simple natural resource management plans that contribute to reducing the dynamics of deforestation in its area of implementation, the province of Sankuru".

It is in this context that Mr MOBUNDA TIKO Joël, ERAIFT doctoral student in the DeSIRA Agro-forestry program, carried out a 4-month research mission (September 2023 to January 2024), in the two territories of Lodja and Lomela, Sankuru province, as part of his doctoral thesis, entitled: "Characterization of socio-demographic, agrarian and carbon sequestration potential in a context of integrated management of historical rubber plantations (*Hevea brasiliensis* (Wild. ex A. Juss.) Müll. Arg. 1965 in Sankuru province, DR Congo".

The aim of the mission was to collect the data needed to characterize the socio-demographic and agrarian profile and assess the contribution of historical rubber plantations to the maintenance of forest carbon and the socio-economic development of the population of Sankuru province.

During this field mission, the following partial results were achieved:

- Characterization of the socio-demographic profile, assessment of ecosystem services provided by old plantations and farmers' perceptions of these ecosystem services;
- Floristic inventories to characterize the floristic diversity and structural parameters of historical rubber plantations in the Lodja and Lomela territories have been carried out;
- The carbon storage potential of historical rubber plantations in Sankuru province is determined.
- A survey of plantation boundaries is carried out to map the remaining rubber plantations in the Lodja and Lomela territories.
- series of capacity-building training courses for students, teaching staff from local institutions, members of the administration and civil society have been carried out.

Protecting the Sankuru forest ecosystem is essential, as it is home to part of the Salonga National Park and the Sankuru Nature Reserve, which is home to two species endemics to the DRC: the bonobo (*Pan paniscus*) and okapi (*Okapia johnstoni*), as well as the fully protected forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*).



ERAIFT sincerely thanks all the resource persons and research institutions in Sankuru who accompanied this data collection process. ERAIFT is also grateful to the European Union and the Kingdom of Belgium for their financial support through the DeSIRA Agro-Forest program that ENABEL is implementing in the Sankuru landscape.

The photo shows doctoral student MOBUNDA TIKO Joël taking core samples of rubberwood for density analysis in the laboratory.