

Successful Launch of the 2025 Field Training in Integrated Land and Development Management (STADI) by ERAIFT at the Odzala-Kokoua-Lossi National Park (PNOKL), Republic of the Congo

Mbomo, 31 October 2025

The Regional Postgraduate School for Integrated Management of Tropical Forests and Territories (ERAIFT), a Category II Centre under the auspices of UNESCO, proudly announces the successful completion of the first month of the 2025 Field Training in Integrated Land and Development Management (STADI), held at the Odzala-Kokoua-Lossi National Park (PNOKL) in the Republic of the Congo. This practical field training, benefiting 40 trainees, including 39 from six COMIFAC member countries and one from Burundi, constitutes a key stage in the hands-on learning process of ERAIFT's Regional Master's Programmes in Protected Areas and Biosphere Reserve Management (GAP/GRB) and Forest Management Techniques (TAF).

A Successful Scientific and Practical Immersion: From 1 to 31 October 2025, the activities focused on: (1) Logistical setup and coordination with site partners (Odzala-Kokoua-Lossi Foundation, African Parks Network, and Congolese authorities); (2) Practical training in remote sensing and Geographic Information Systems (GIS – radar); and (3) Introduction to participatory research and environmental governance methods, fostering constructive exchanges between trainees, local communities (CL), and Indigenous Peoples (PA). The students produced their first thematic maps of the PNOKL and collected life stories illustrating the interactions between surrounding populations and park managers.

Tangible and Promising Results: The 2025 STADI has led to: (i) the strengthening of technical and methodological capacities among the 40 trainees; (ii) the enhancement of interdisciplinary and intercultural cohesion within the group; (iii) the establishment of a collaborative framework linking research, conservation, and local communities; and (iv) the development of an integrated geospatial database for monitoring park activities.

Next Steps: For November 2025, ERAIFT plans to: Continue participatory surveys on endogenous knowledge systems and local value chains; Conduct hands-on data collection using KoboToolbox; Pursue participatory mapping activities; Deliver applied training in systemic analysis related to territorial planning, landscape management, and integrated development; and Consolidate research outputs initiated during the first month.

Renewed Commitment to Training and Conservation: The STADI embodies ERAIFT's vision: to train African leaders capable of reconciling development and conservation through integrated, participatory, and scientifically sound approaches.

This field training is made possible thanks to the close collaboration between ERAIFT, the Odzala-Kokoua-Lossi Foundation, African Parks Network, and the Congolese authorities, as

well as with financial and technical partners including the European Union, AGRINATURA, and PARTICIP. ERAIFT extends its sincere gratitude to all partners and expresses its deep appreciation to the European Union and AGRINATURA for their continued trust and support.

