

## SUCCESS STORY

# Bountiful harvest in Ilinga, Lukolela

**October 2023**



*The chilli harvest in Ilinga*

Ilinga village, Lukolela territory in DRC's Equateur province, secured their customary land by establishing a Community Forest in 2018 and becoming the first community in the country to develop an inclusive and sustainable 'simple management plan' for their forest the following year. Based on this plan, community members are working on ways of developing a self-reliant economy and improving their income, while also sustainably managing their forest lands.

### **Bountiful harvest in Ilinga**

The Ilinga community members had long followed their ancestors' traditions in cultivating cassava. Working long days, many community members' daily routine revolved around its production.

However, the *Forests for the Future* project, co-funded by USAID and implemented by Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK) and their local partner Organisation groupe d'action pour sauver l'homme et son environnement (GASHE), also focuses on raising awareness of and providing training on alternative food crops with shorter growing seasons (three months) and low-volume products with higher economic value.

Mpema Mboyo, an Ilinga native and Secretary of the Local Management Committee of the Ilinga Ina Bomboyo Community Forestry Concession, as it is known, has begun to cultivate chillies commercially.

He explained, 'I have been growing chillies and harvesting and selling them every three months since 2021. Thanks to the chilli yield, I'm building my house. I didn't have the possibility of doing this just by selling the cassava we are used to growing here'.



*Mpema Mboyo, an Ilinga native and Secretary of the Local Management Committee of the Ilinga Ina Bomboyo Community Forestry Concession*



*A house under construction*

*Forests for the Future* also provides entrepreneurship training to members of the Ilinga community. Angèle Longeza, a native of the Ilinga community and a member of the Ilinga *Chikwanges* Mums' association was delighted by having the opportunity to join the training. She has increased the income she derives from *chikwanges*, a local fermented-cassava product. She noted, 'With the money I earn from my chilli field and the processing of cassava to make and sell tastier *chikwanges*, I've been able to open a small store in the village to make it easier for my community to get supplies of basic staples. I am able to make some money for my daughter and I to live'.



*Angèle Longeza in the store in Ilinga she was able to open thanks to the training and subsequent earnings.*

GASHE and RFUK have worked in Ilinga village for more than ten years supporting the community to map its land, establish its the community forest and create strong governance bodies that ensure ecosystem protection and equitable benefit sharing. These are necessary foundations for the successful improvement of food production. *Forests for the Future* has improved technical knowledge of how to plant new crops, and built the community's confidence and know-how to develop a self-reliant economy.

These more sustainable and lucrative farming techniques have also helped reduce pressures on the surrounding forests in this carbon and biodiversity rich landscape.

This success has been key in scaling up the model around the community and will be replicated beyond the region.