

Editor's Note

The Capital Is There. The Pipeline Isn't — Yet.

A recurring line in this year's commentary on African investment deserves scrutiny. Writing in Ecofin Agency this July, PIDG's Denesh Srishanker made a case worth repeating: the continent does not suffer from a shortage of capital. More than \$2 trillion in African domestic institutional capital, he argues, sits sidelined not by scarcity but by overstated risk perception — capital that local-currency guarantees, credit enhancement, and blended structures could convert into bankable deployment.

It is a useful provocation to open our first edition with, because the news from the Congo Basin this quarter offers a live test of the claim.

Consider Cameroon's Yoko-Lena-Tibati corridor. The government secured 200,000 hectares of farmland for agro-industrial development under the Integrated Agro-Pastoral and Fisheries Import-Substitution Project (PIISAH) import-substitution plan. Land tenure, which is the precondition most frequently cited as the barrier to investment, was resolved — And yet, per the 2027–2029 budget document tabled in early July, only 3,000 hectares (1.5% of the total land) has entered actual development.

Secure land title alone did not draw capital.

What appears to be missing is everything sitting between title and term sheet: feasibility work, offtake structuring, infrastructure, and confidence that community land-rights questions have been resolved on the ground, not just on paper.

For instance, the World Bank's FOREST program in the DRC, using results-based financing to mobilize local cookstove manufacturers toward 500,000 households, is structuring a genuinely investable clean-cooking value chain out of what has historically been treated as a pure subsidy sector — pairing charcoal-demand reduction with agroforestry and verified performance payments. The six Congo Basin governments now implementing their Carbon Market and Climate Finance roadmaps are doing the less visible work of aligning MRV capacity and fiscal frameworks with Paris Agreement rules before, not after, credit issuance.

These are technical assistance problems before they are capital problems. And they are capital and business problems before they become macro financial problems that only a national policy can meaningfully address.

It becomes inevitable, then, to highlight this structural problem of catalytic funding. Investment cannot scale where the formal financial and institutional infrastructure needed to absorb it is still weak. The question on whether it should or should not be scaled is another caveat in impact investing thus making the national intervention even more necessary. Bankable projects require credible institutions, transparent documentation, functioning markets, reliable data, enforceable contracts and governance systems capable of converting finance into productive investment. In that sense, capital is not the only input to development.

This is the distinction we have spent much of the past six months applying to our own pipeline: the binding constraint on Congo Basin blended finance is not an absence of capital or even of ambition — it is the scarcity of projects doing the unglamorous work of becoming genuinely investment-ready. Projects need a structure and foundation first before receiving capital.

Technical Assistance (TA), as it is called, is where that work happens. TA does more than complex capital deployed ahead of readiness. Our own pipeline has made the limitations of this landscape difficult to ignore. Many great opportunities sit below the ticket sizes that institutional capital can efficiently pursue, others lack the financial, legal or technical

documentation needed for basic diligence. In some cases, development finance remains too easily reduced to “aid delivery” rather than being structured around the creation of durable economic value and investable markets.

These are not reasons to step away from the region. They are precisely the reasons to be more deliberate about where capital, technical assistance and institutional support are deployed and what is the impact we aim to unlock.

Given the international backdrop, the case for rigorous, well-sequenced TA has only strengthened. Donor capital is not disappearing, but it is being allocated with more scrutiny of what it is actually buying. That is the environment this newsletter, and the pipeline behind it, is built for.

About Canopy Trust

It is this gap — between land secured and land developed, between good intentions and bankable structure — that Canopy Trust was built to close.

Canopy Trust is a facility incubated by the Catalytic Finance Foundation, a Geneva-based non-profit foundation with seventeen years of experience in blended finance, supported by CAFI, Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI), and Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Canopy Trust is providing blended finance solutions to attract private sector investments to limit deforestation and support socio-economic development in Central Africa (namely Cameroon, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo), by mobilizing concessional capital to attract private investor.

We work through a continuum of interconnected mechanisms:

1. Market creation — the segment where most of our current portfolio sits — supports early-development-stage projects through technical assistance, closing exactly the kind of readiness gap this issue's editorial describes, before capital is asked to underwrite it.
2. And where models are proven, we help mobilize private capital to scale them sustainably either through direct investments in project or fund investment to scale the proof of concept.

Ticket sizes range from USD 100,000–500,000 in technical assistance to USD 1–5 million in direct investment and USD 1-5 million through funds. We work across three sectors :

- deforestation-free agriculture, agroforestry and forestry;
- sustainable cooking energy and renewable energy; and
- processing and transformation —

We welcome project submissions aligned with our mission at canopytrust.org/en/submit-project, and can be reached at canopytrust@catalyticfinance.org.

Progress

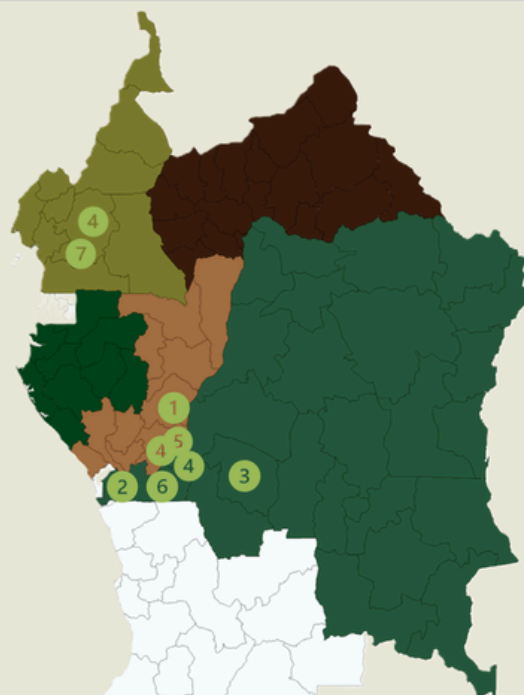
The project has been successfully initiated, structured and operationalized during its first year of operation. In the last 6 months, The project has continued to ramp up its operations and strengthen its structuring, with 10 projects under technical assistance, 2 direct investments prepared for Investment Committee approval in 2026, and one Fund Investment also prepared for IC approval in 2026, in just over a year of operations (since June 2025). The project pipeline is steadily strengthening, with a 30% increase in new project entries, while the addition of a new team member in Kinshasa will reinforce both the sourcing strategy and TA management capacity

Portfolio

Canopy Trust seeks to invest and develop private-sector driven projects in sustainable agriculture or forestry, renewable energy or deforestation-free value chains and economic development, within the Congo Basin. Since inception, Canopy Trust has approved technical assistance (TA) grants for 7 projects:

TA Map

1. **Asc Impact**
Gamboma, Republic of the Congo
2. **DRC FFF**
Kongo Central Province, DRC
3. **Faja Lobi**
Kwilu, DRC
4. **PayGas**
Brazzaville, Rep. of the Congo
Kinshasa, DRC
Yaoundé, Cameroon
5. **PKT & Partners Group**
Kinshasa, DRC
6. **Rouge Congo**
Kongo Central Province, DRC
7. **Scoops Cecacao**
Bondjock, Cameroon



Asc Impact: a sustainable land use project in Gamboma, Republic of the Congo, which converts degraded savanna into productive timber plantations, large-scale agriculture, and protected conservation zones

DRC FFF: a project in DRC which aims to develop an integrated food, feed, and fuel platform to strengthen agricultural value chains while contributing to deforestation mitigation and improved food security.

Faja Lobi: a project in DRC which aims to develop an integrated agroforestry, sustainable charcoal and food processing model to address deforestation, food insecurity, and low-efficiency agricultural value chains.

Paygas: a project transforming access to clean and affordable cooking energy for low-income households.

PKT & Partners Group: a project in DRC aiming to scale the production of deforestation-free charcoal alternatives to address energy poverty, deforestation, and health risks linked to traditional biomass cooking.

Rouge Congo: a project in DRC that revitalizes artisanal palm oil production through an agroecological approach, partnering with smallholder farmers to plant on degraded savanna land while maintaining a strict zero-deforestation commitment.

Scoops Cecacao: a Cameroon-based cocoa cooperative project built around an integrated tree-to-bar model that combines agroforestry, regenerative agriculture, post-harvest handling, and artisanal chocolate processing.

Events

As we continue building the pipelines and connecting investors to impactful projects, our team is attending the most relevant events in our sector. This quarter you can meet the team at:

Building Bridges

Julie Goerig, Canopy Trust Programme Manager, will present Canopy Trust on the 6th of October during Building Bridges, Geneva's sustainable finance conference.

Registration required to attend. Further info available here:

Catalytic Finance Foundation - Building Bridges

SITA

David Albertani will speak During SITA; a two-day investment and development forum taking place on 15-16 October 2026 at the International Environment House 2 in Geneva.

Led by Bafing Projects, SITA brings together African project developers, governments, investors, development finance institutions and private-sector partners to help turn African development opportunities into investable projects.

AFSIC

Jiao Tang will speak at AFSIC - Investing in Africa, the London investing event entirely dedicated to Africa, on the 14th of October during the "Meet the Impact Investors" session.

Kinshasa visit

Our colleagues Emmanuel Claude and Julie Goerig will travel to the Congo Basin region in October to meet with local stakeholders, including project developers.

